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Davis et al.

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(54) **PROTECTION BARRIER SYSTEM**

(75) Inventors: **C. Reed Davis**, Knoxville, TN (US); **Richard G. McColl**, Knoxville, TN (US)

(73) Assignee: **Safety Barriers, Inc.**, Knoxville, TN (US)

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **E01F 13/00**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **404/6**
(58) **Field of Search** 404/6, 9, 10; 256/13.1; 403/119, 364

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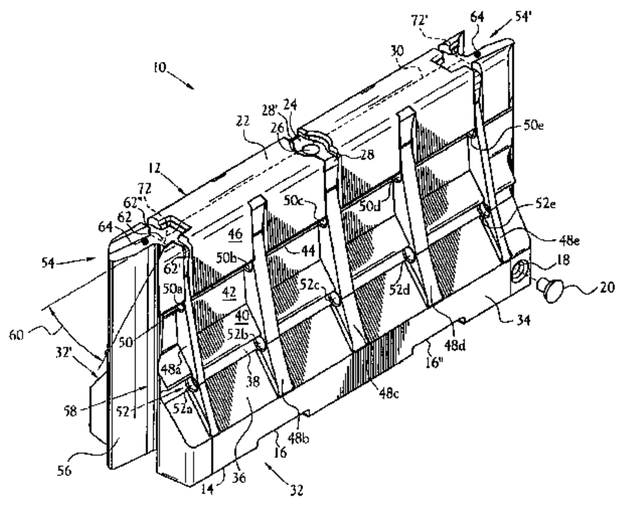
Primary Examiner—Gary S. Hartmann
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Pitts & Brittian, PC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A protection barrier system for energy-absorption of impacts includes an elongated barrier defining a chamber therein. The barrier includes side walls having a plurality of connected non-vertical wall segments and a plurality of buttresses positioned vertically at spaced apart locations along each side wall. One or more guide channels are positioned on each side wall in horizontal alignment with similar guide channels on like-configured barriers. A coupling is disposed on each opposed end of the barrier for coupling of either barrier end juxtaposed in end-to-end nested arrangement with like barriers. A supplemental energy-absorbing system is connectable between opposed ends of end-to-end coupled barriers, providing energy-absorbing tubes removably inserted through each guide channel of each barrier. Cables are extendable through the tubes in the guide channels of the nested barriers, providing additional energy-absorption and deterrence from breaching of the barriers. A method of manufacture for the protection barrier is also disclosed.

5 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



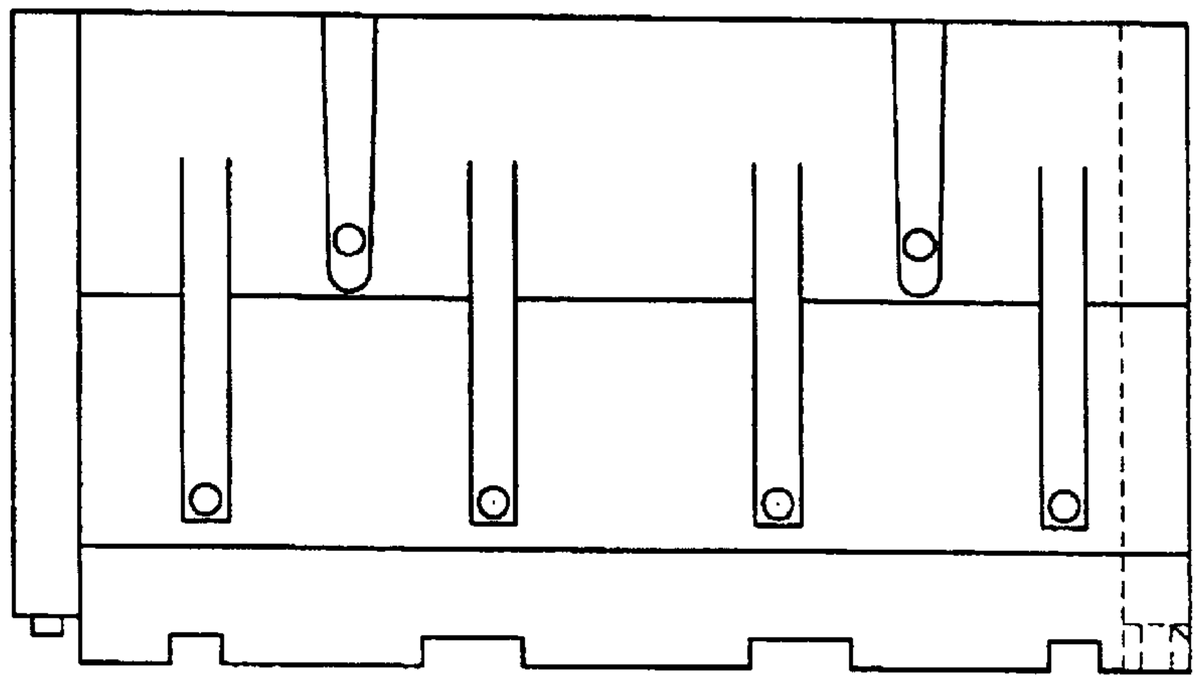


Fig.1
(PRIOR ART)

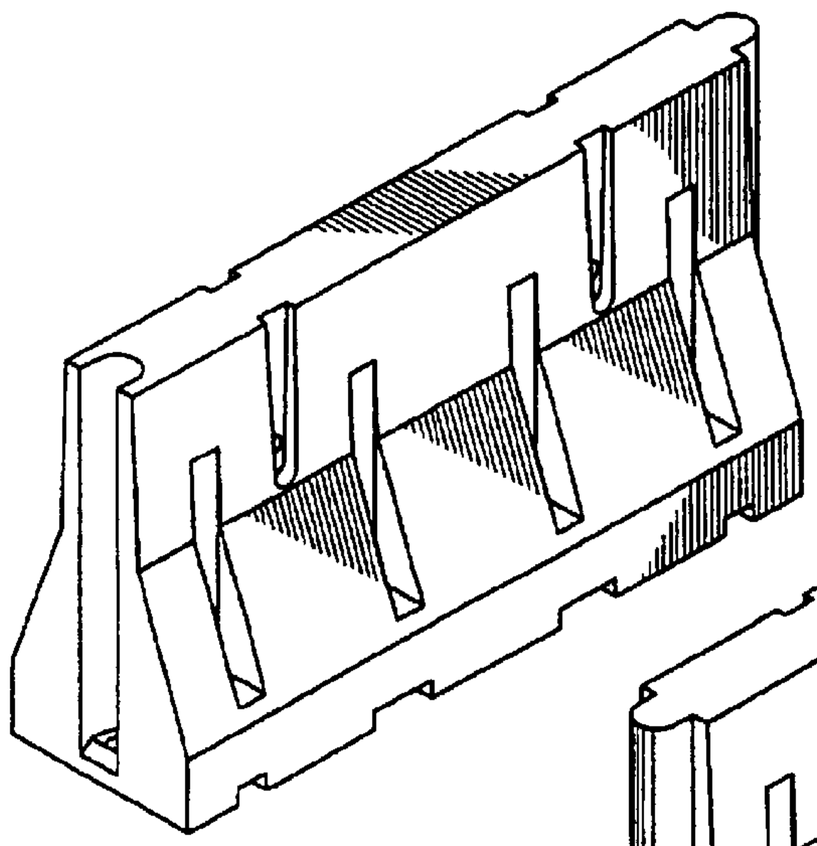


Fig.2
(PRIOR ART)

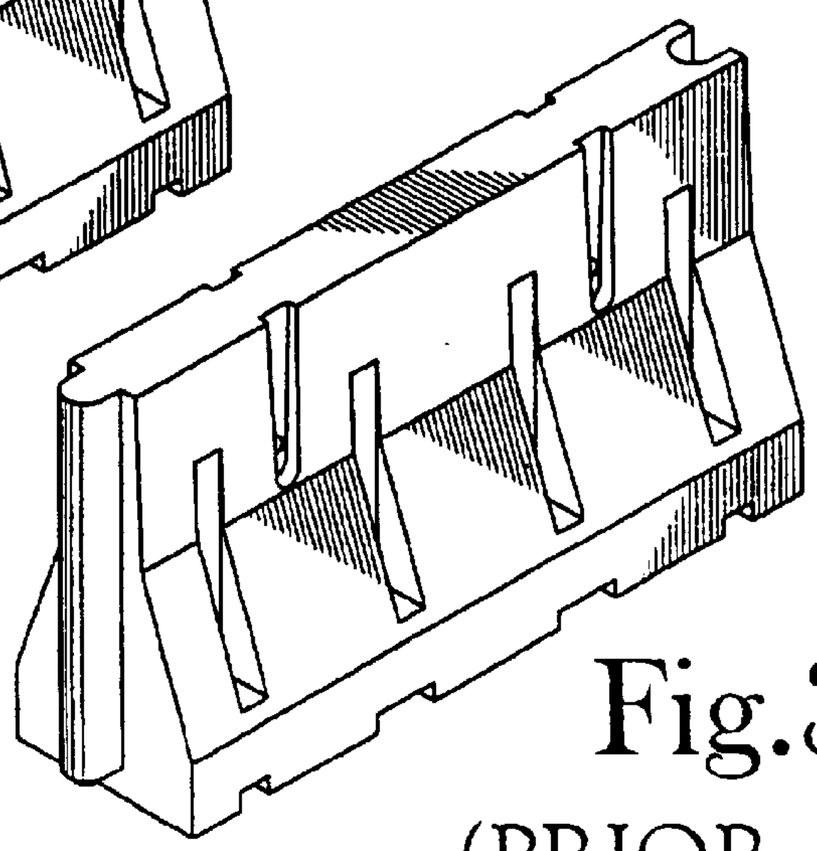
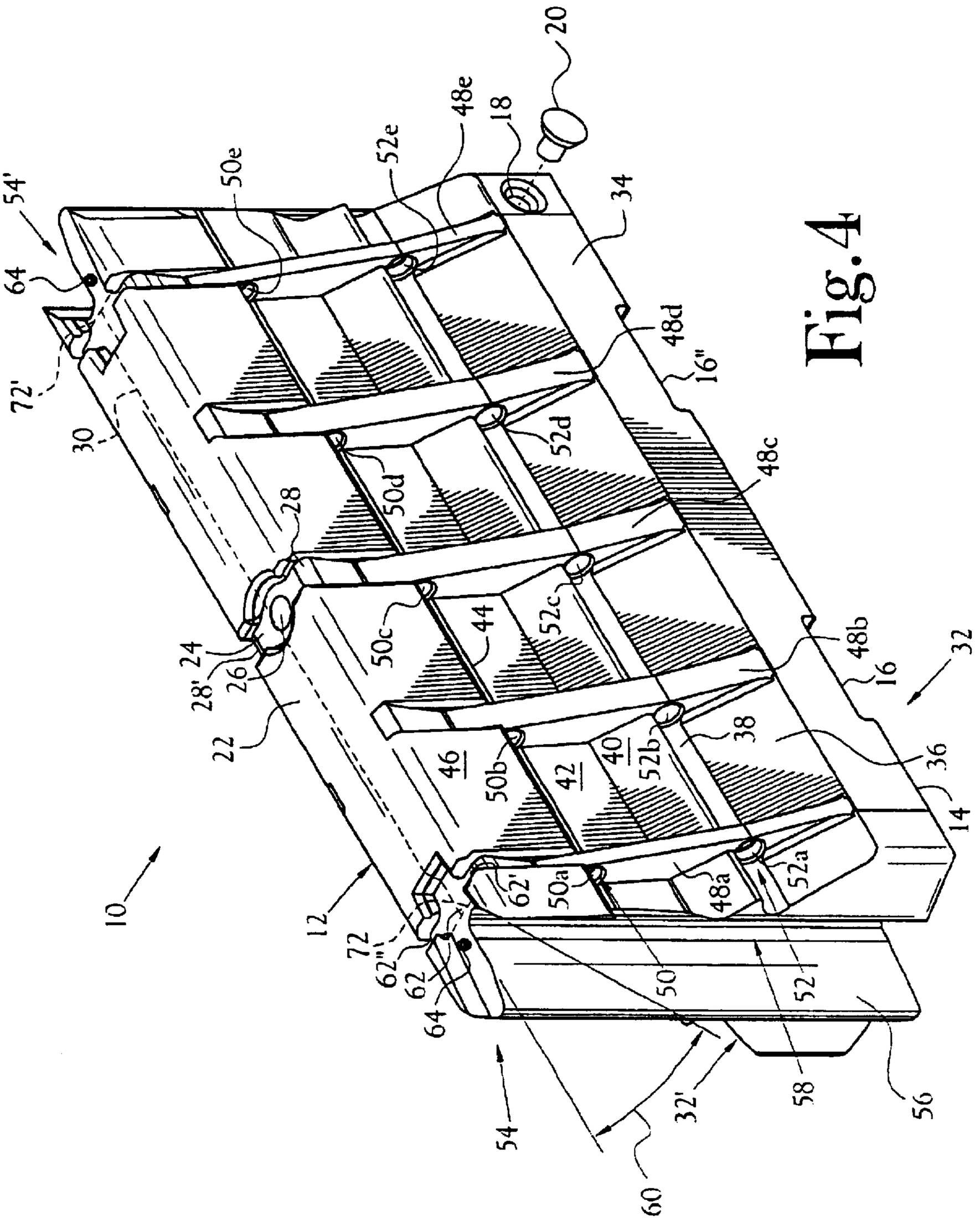


Fig.3
(PRIOR ART)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46
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50a
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50c
50d
50e
52
52a
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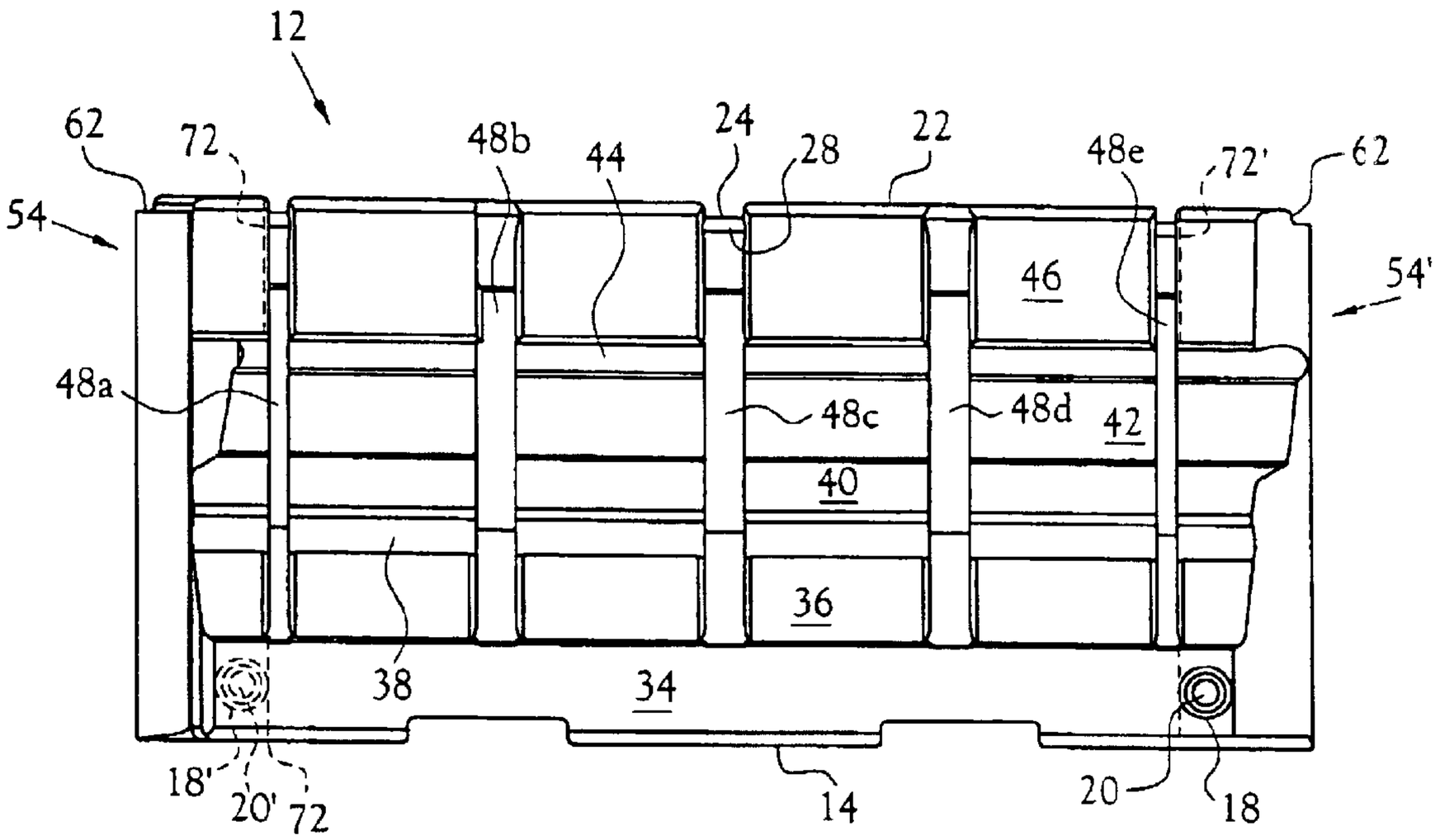
62'
62"
64
64
72
72'

Fig. 4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14
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18

Fig.5

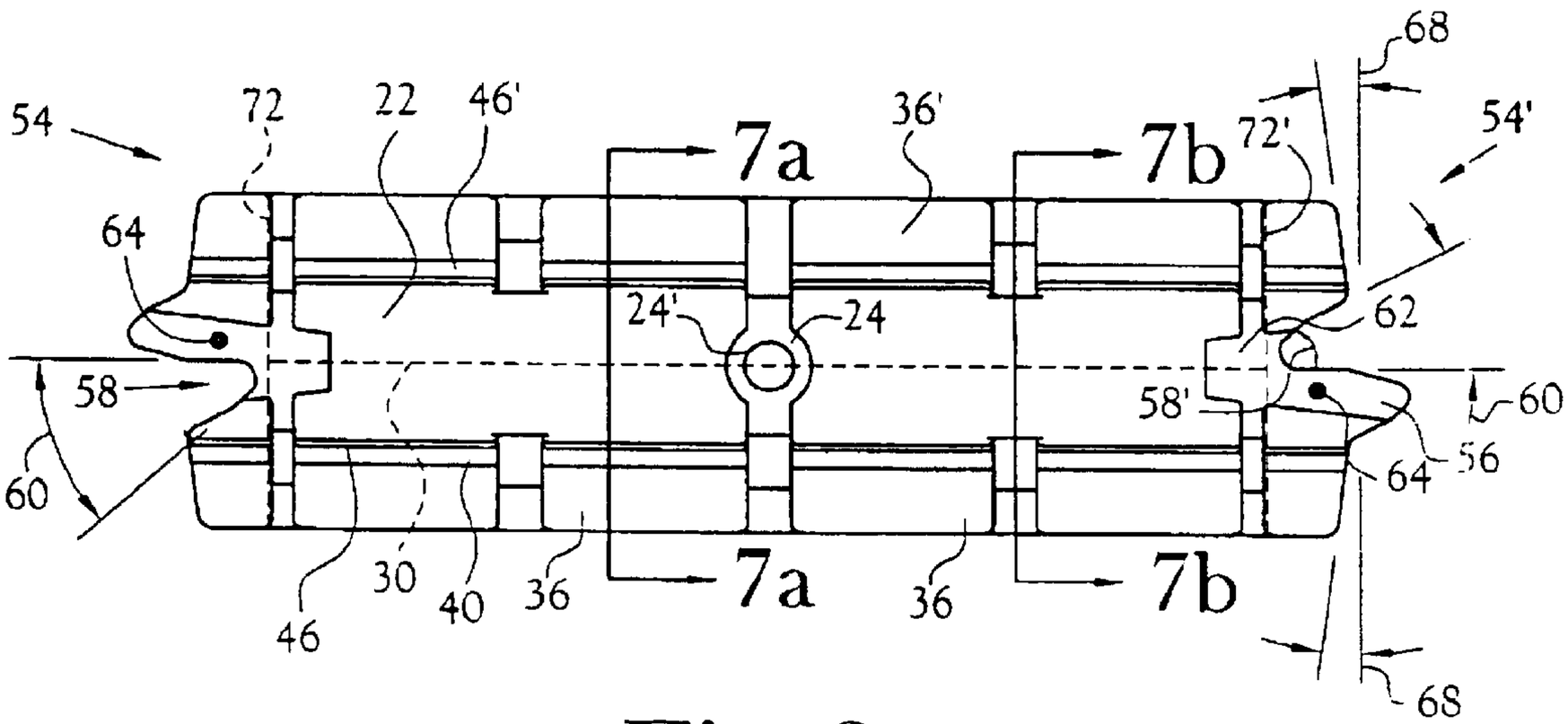
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Fig.6

Fig.8a

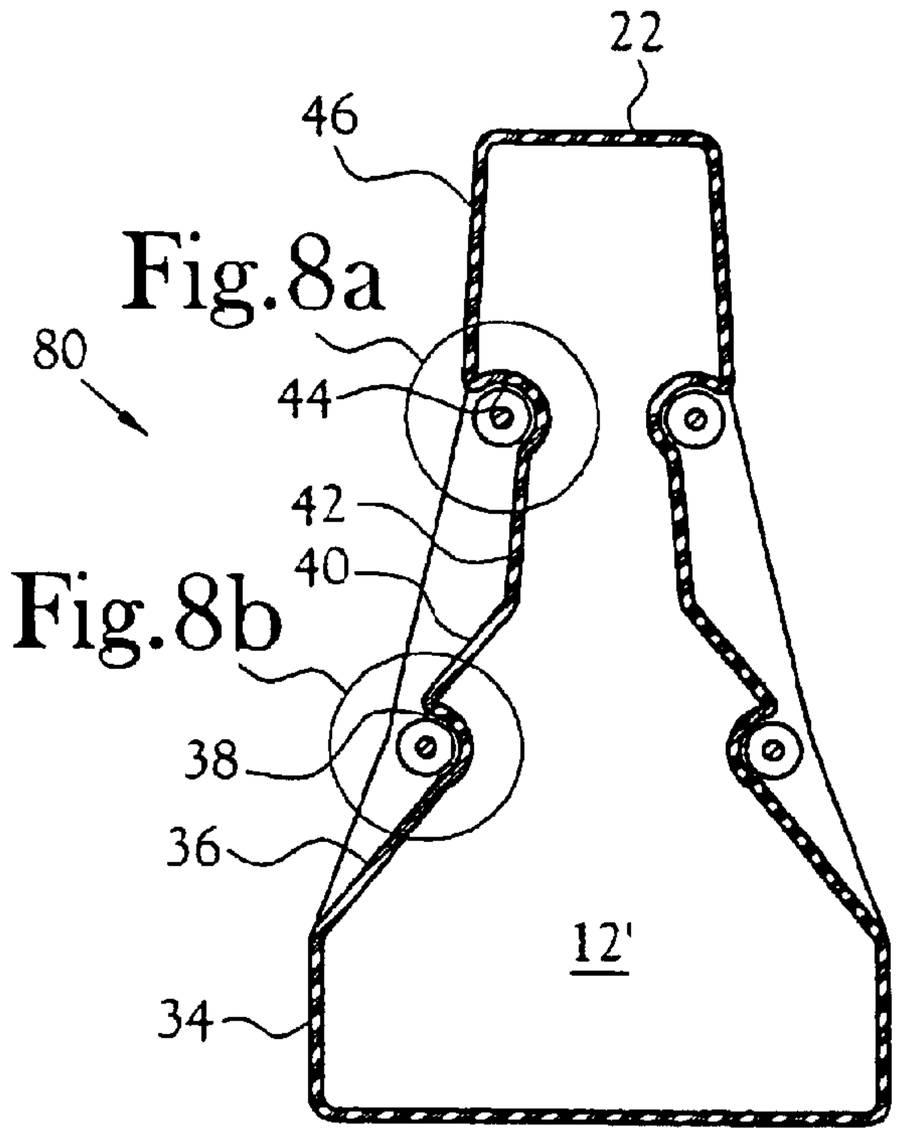


Fig.8b

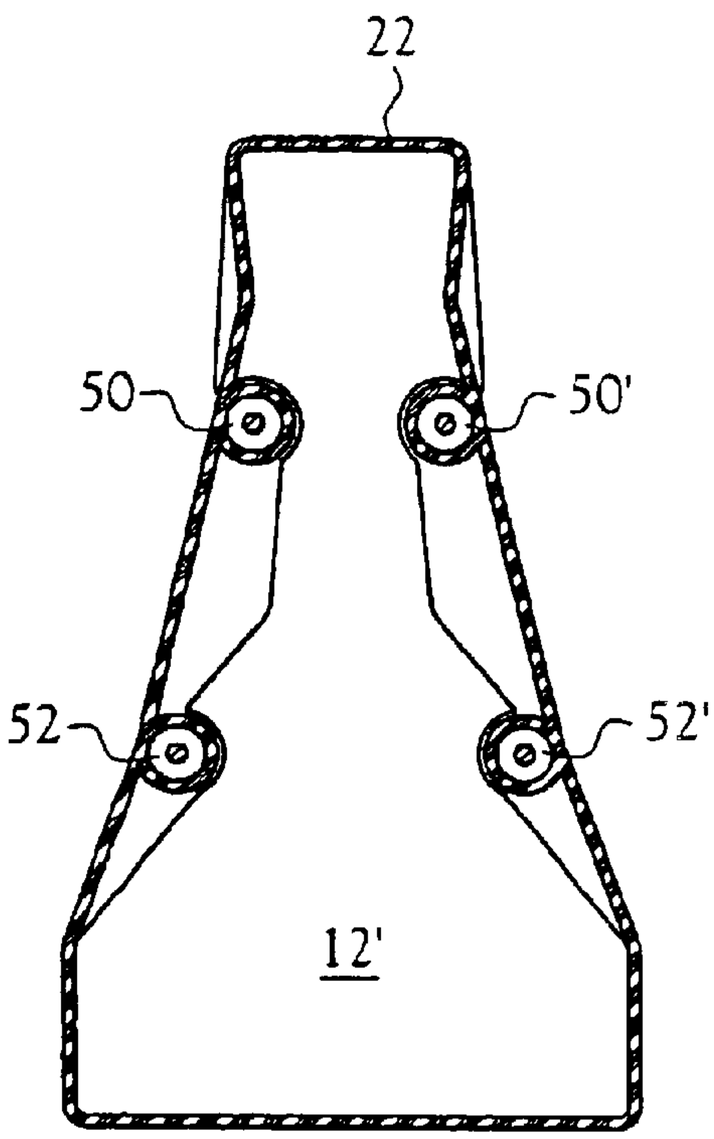
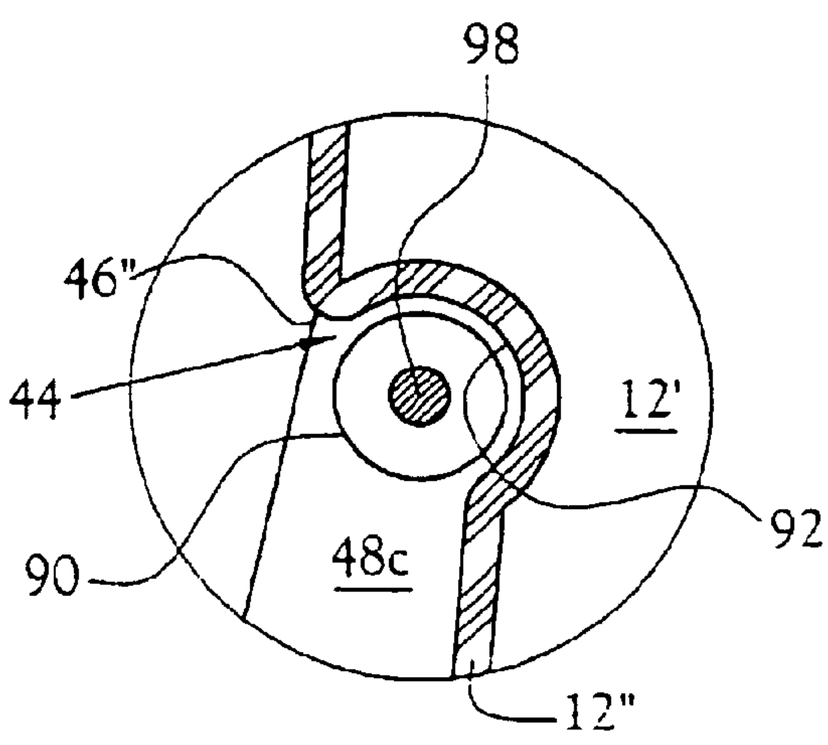


Fig.7a

Fig.7b



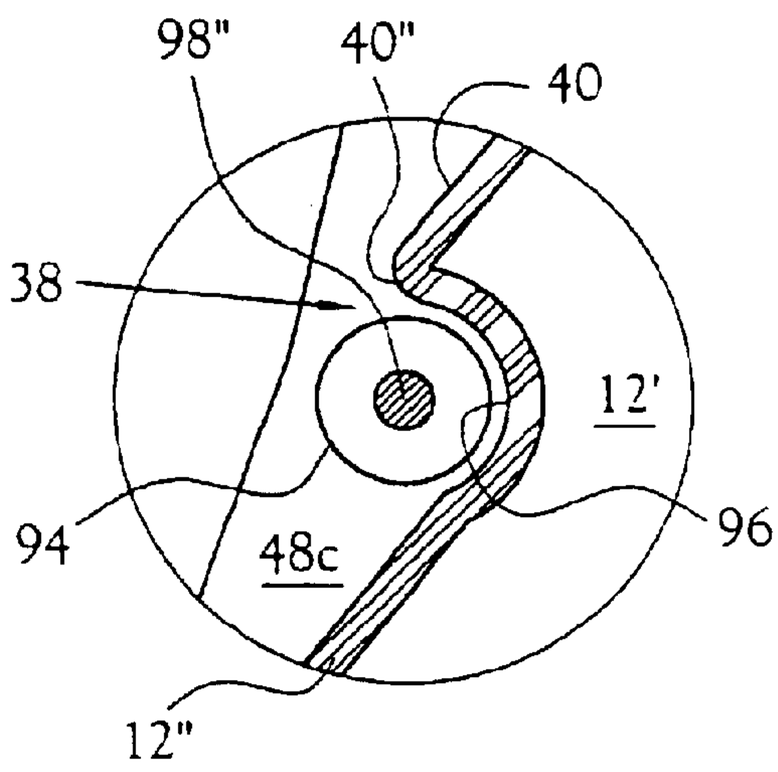


Fig.8a

Fig.8b

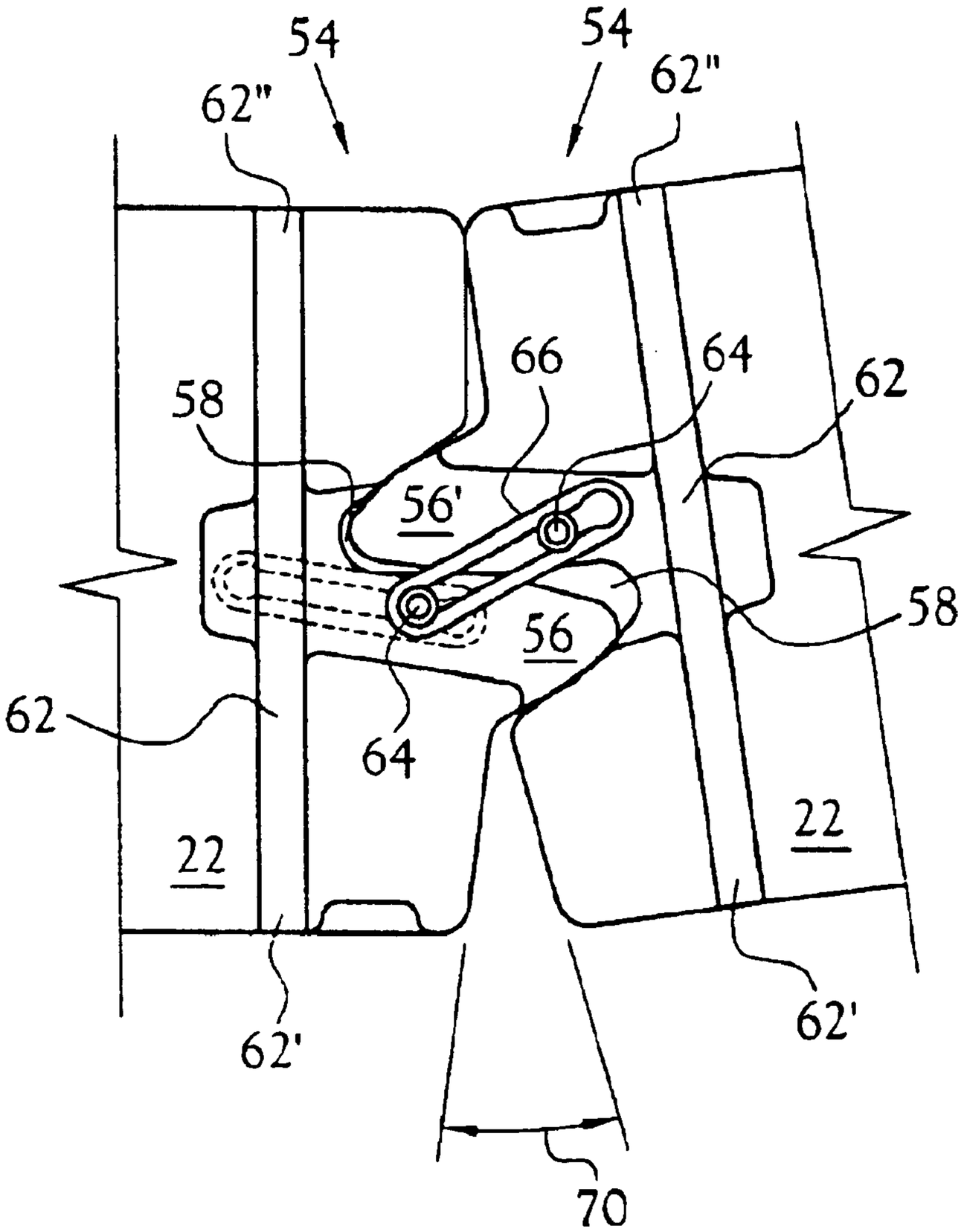


Fig.9

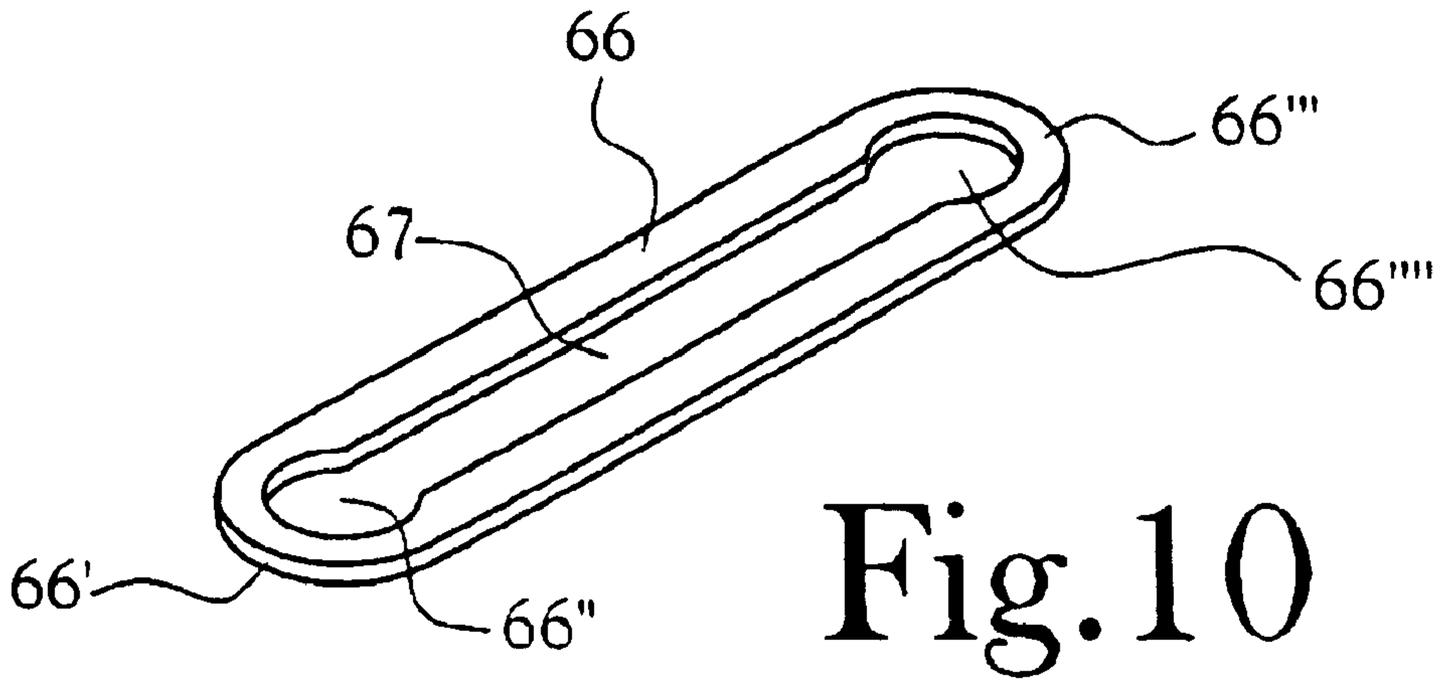


Fig.10

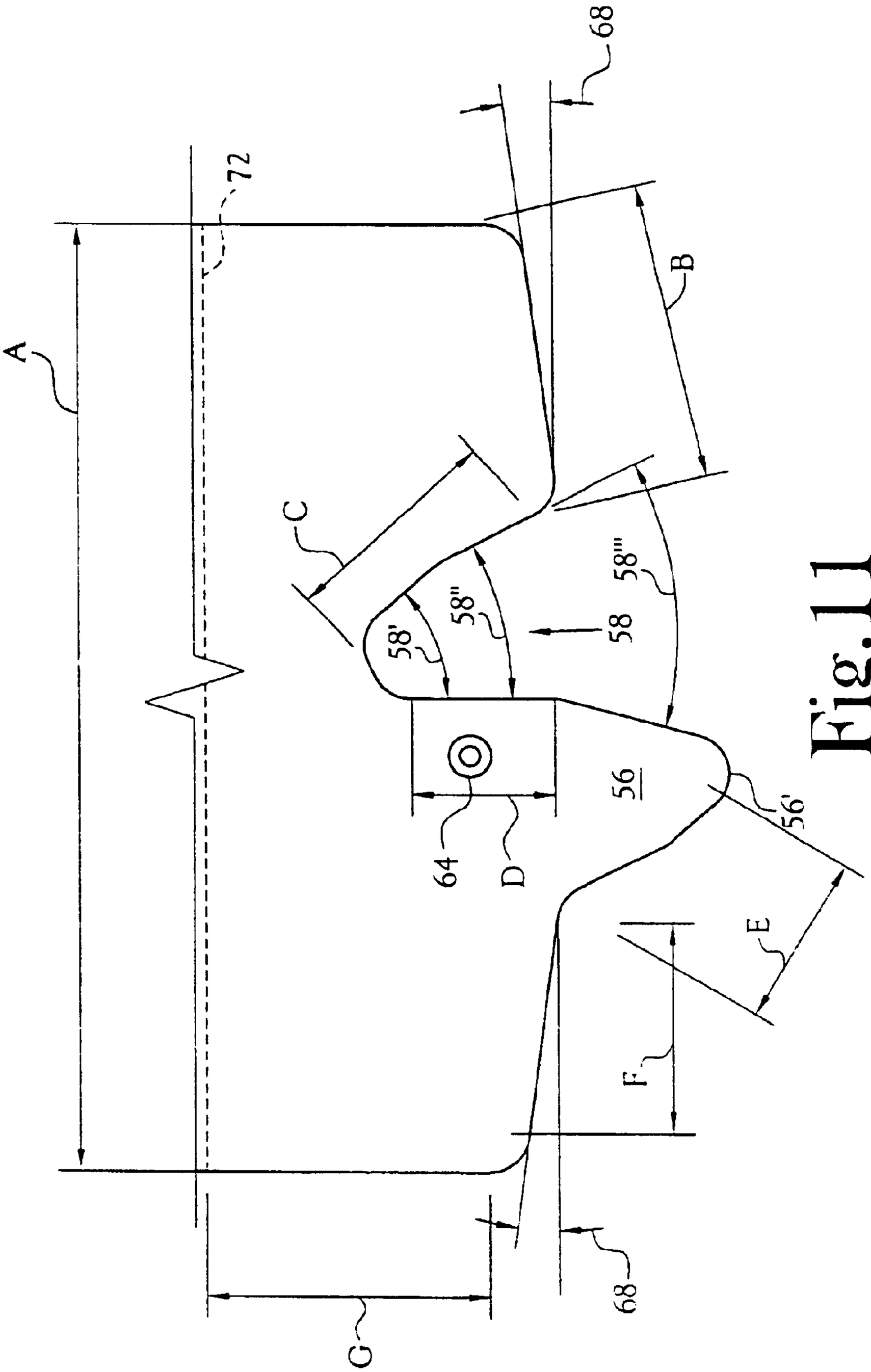


Fig. 11

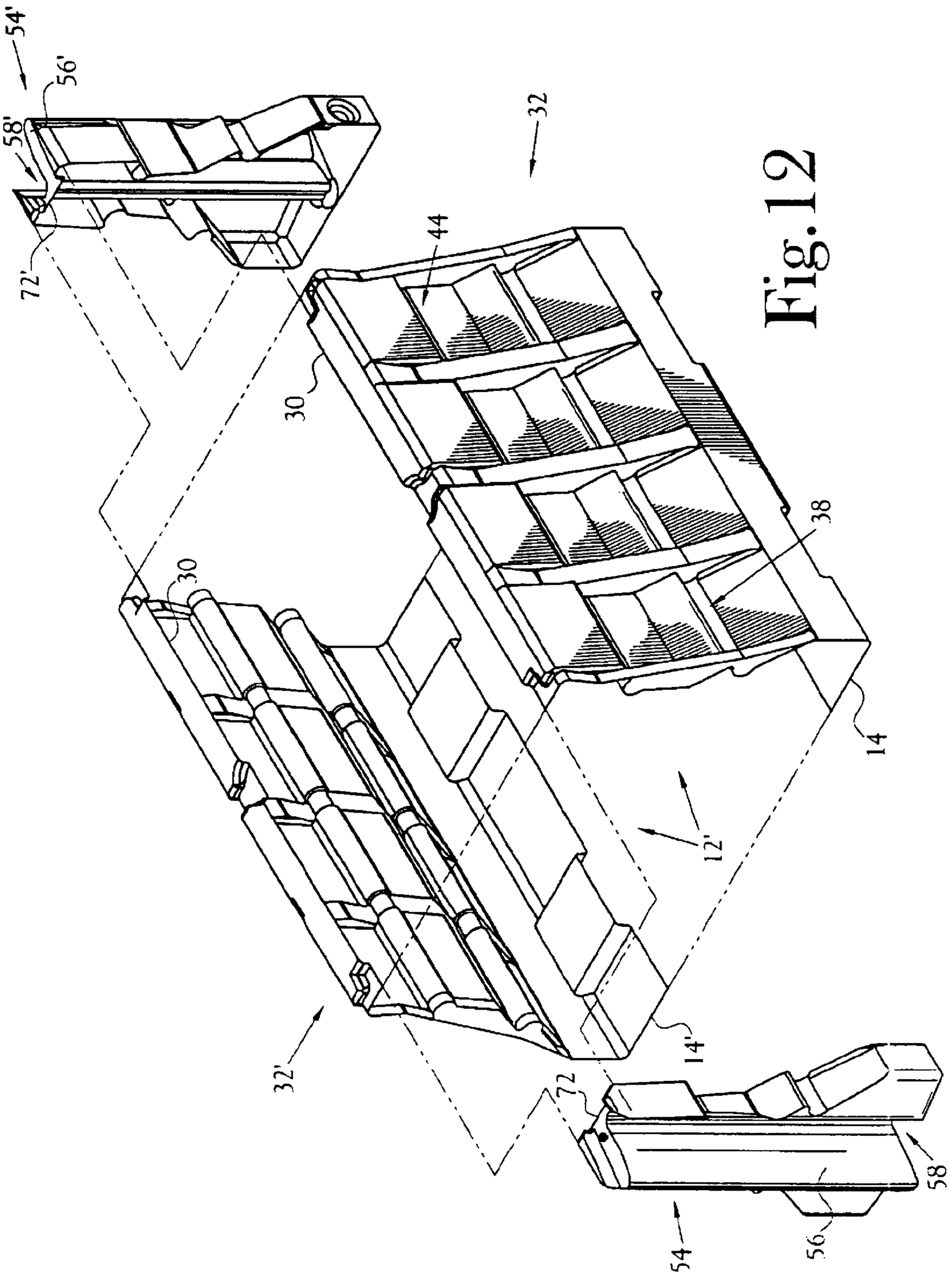
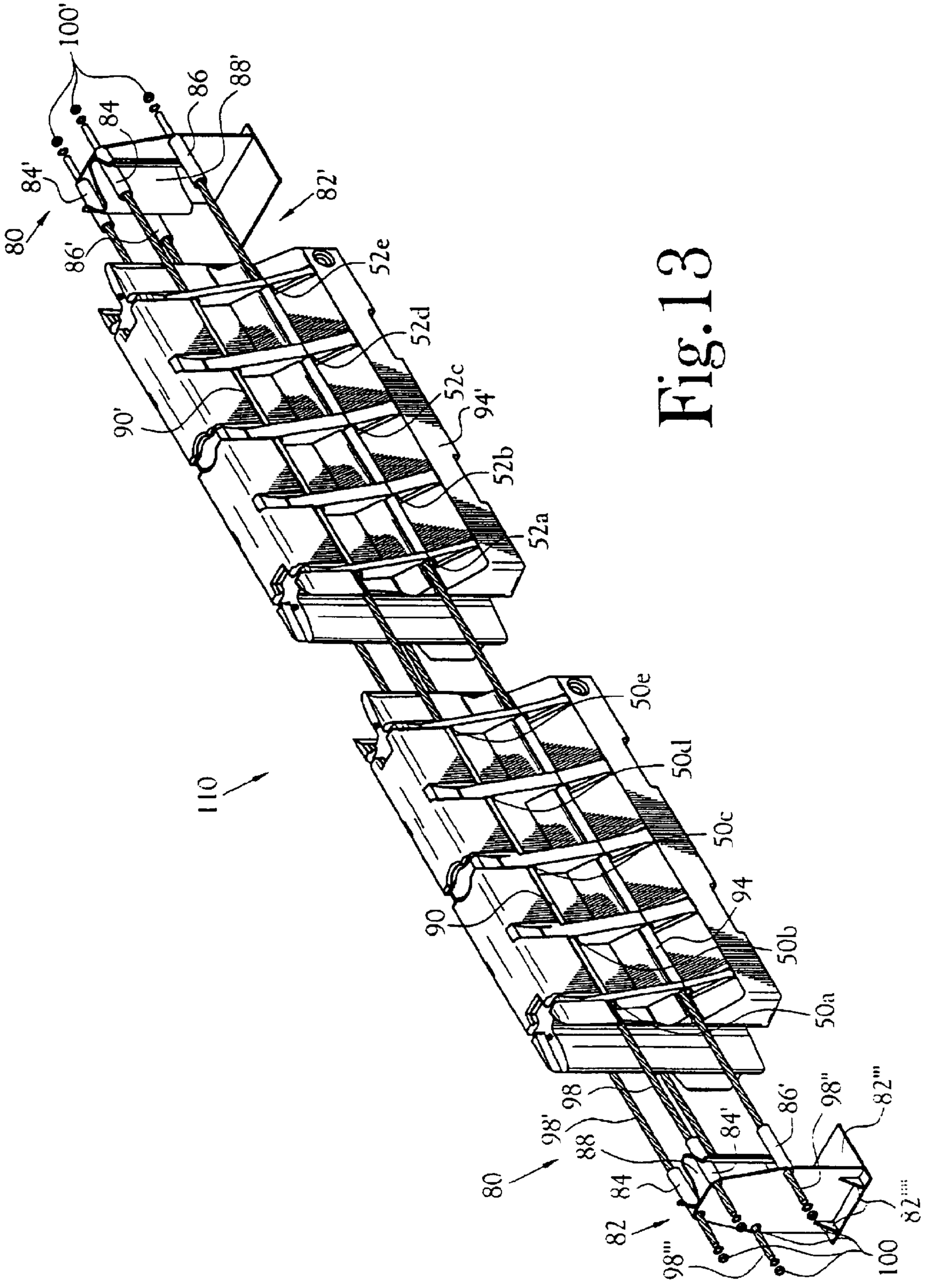


Fig. 12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98''
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82''''
100

Fig. 13

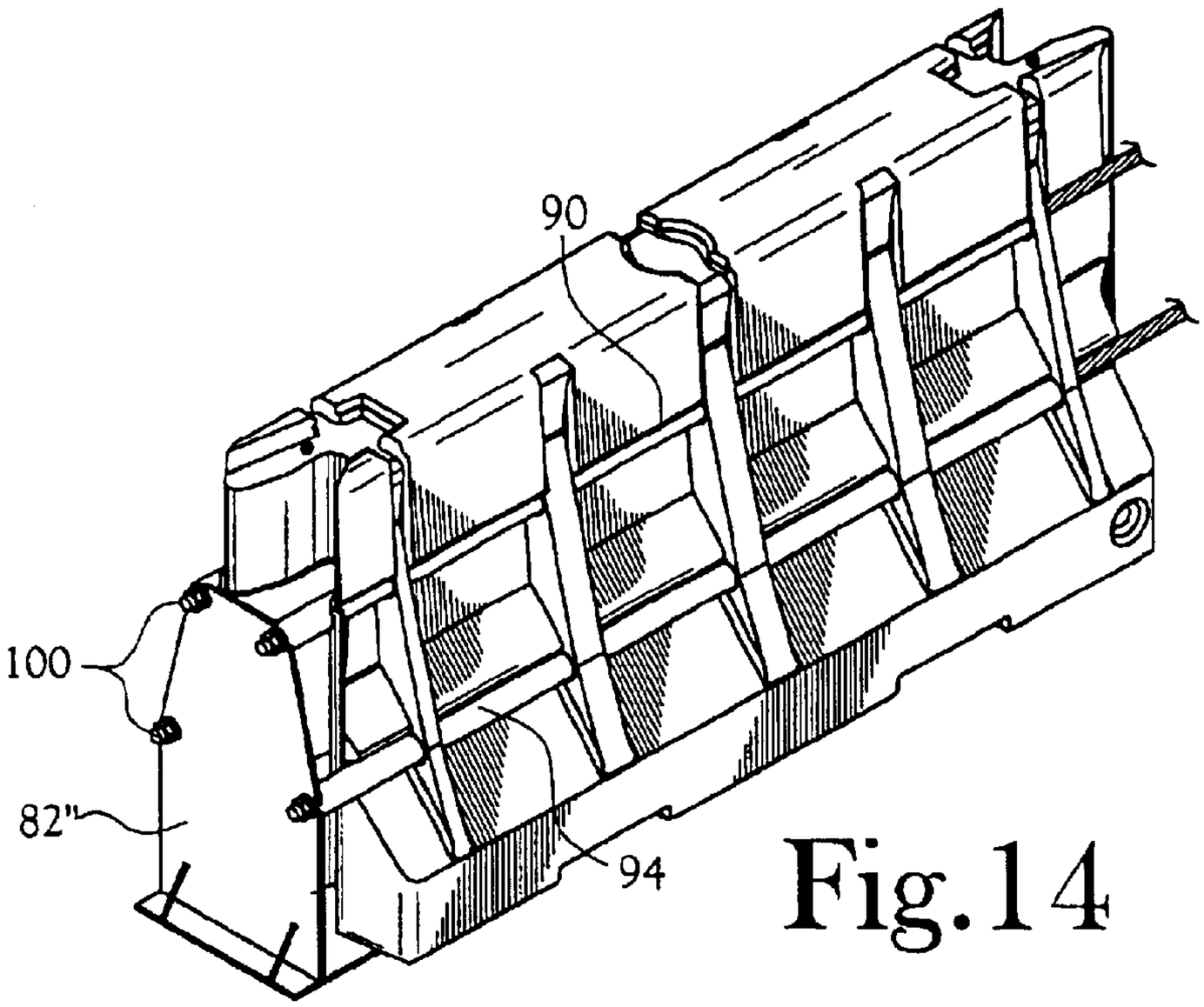

Fig.14

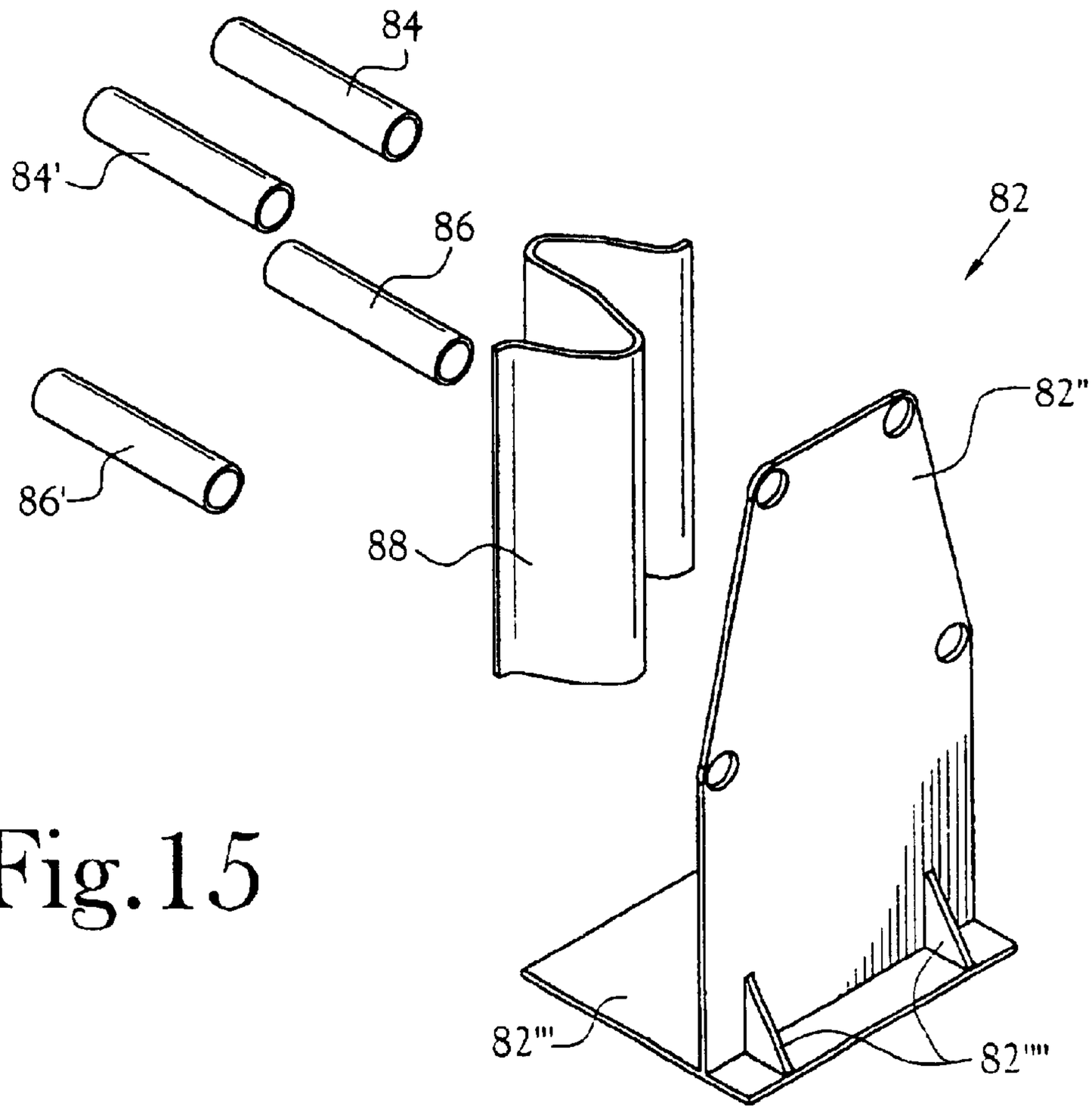

Fig.15

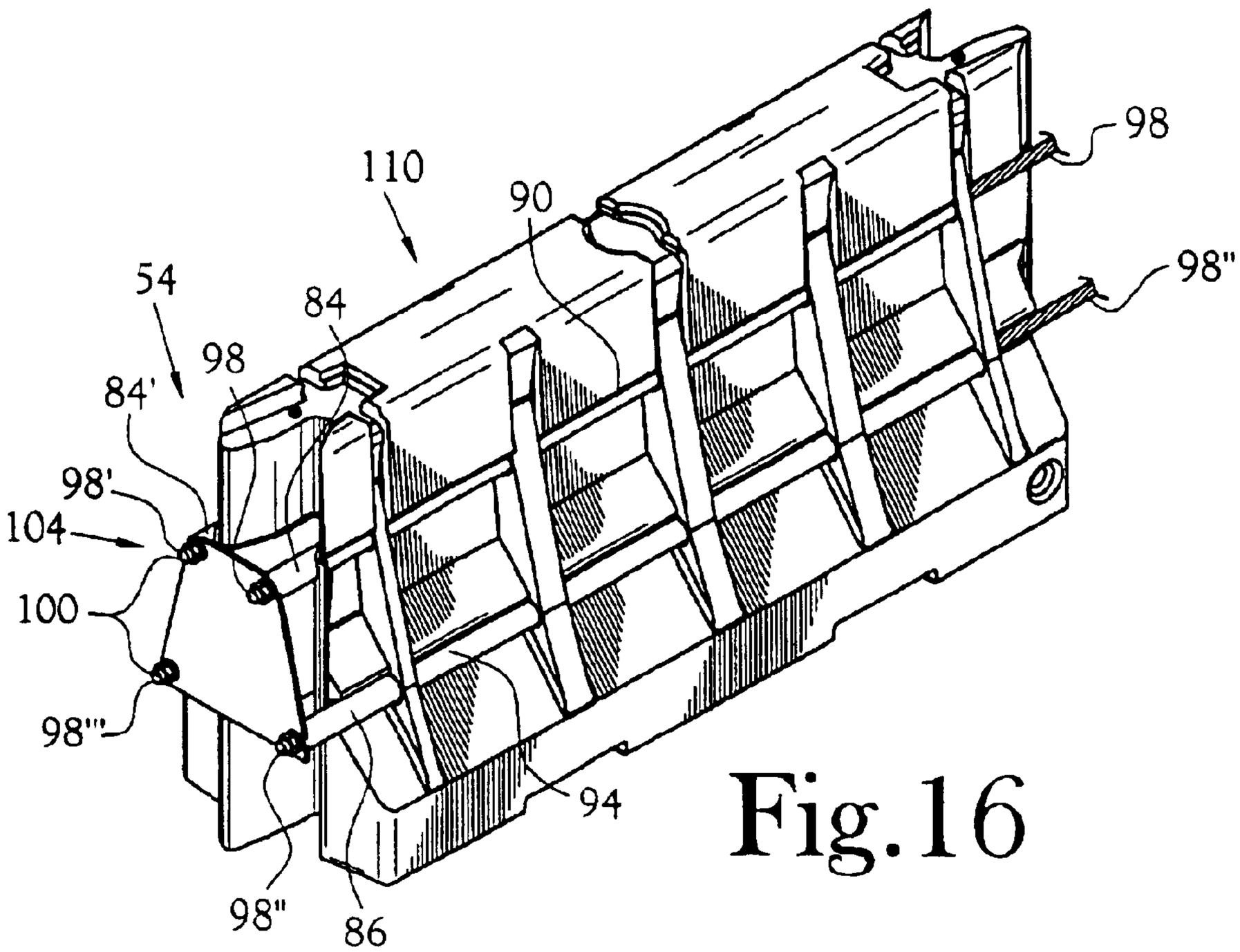

Fig.16

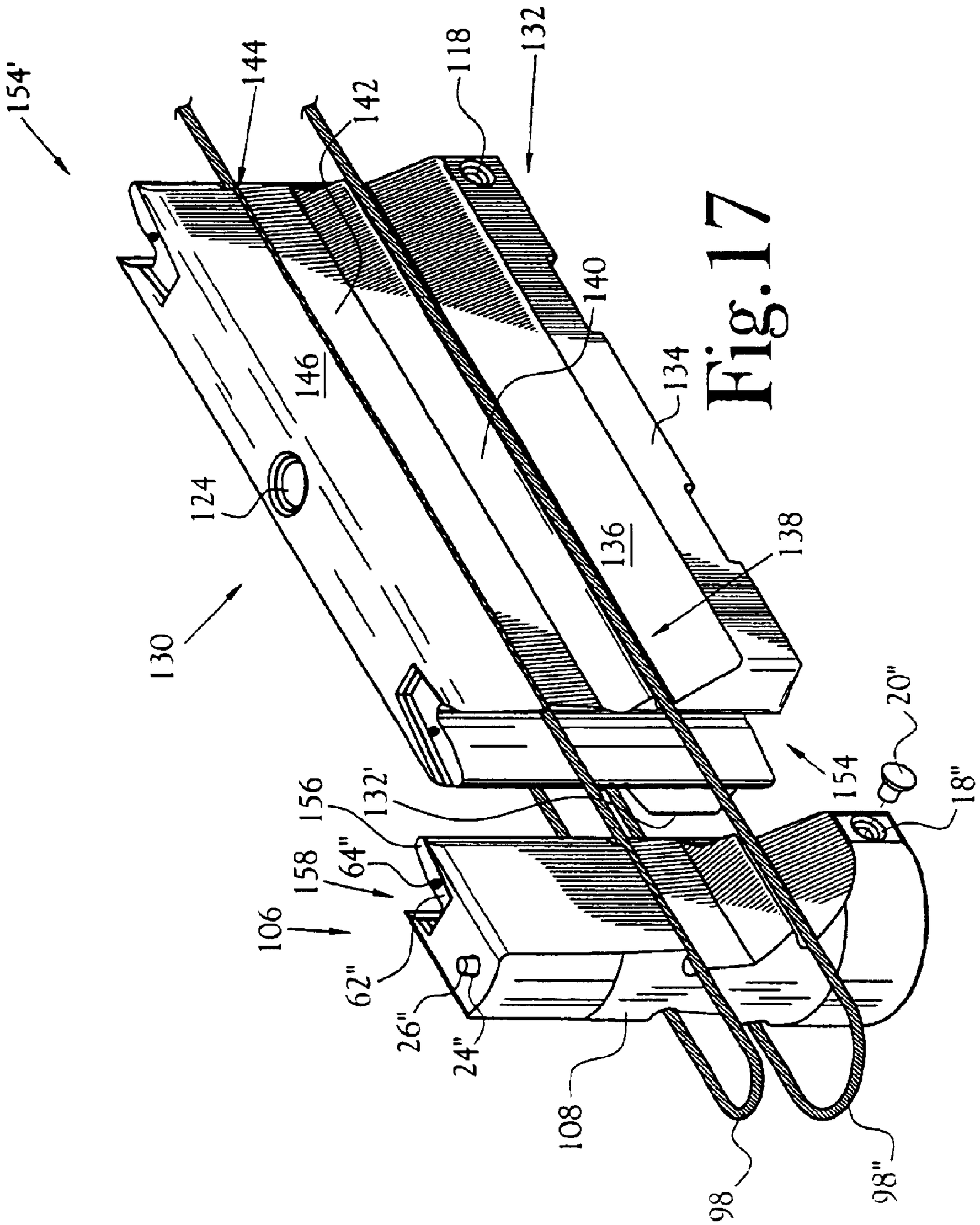
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Fig. 17

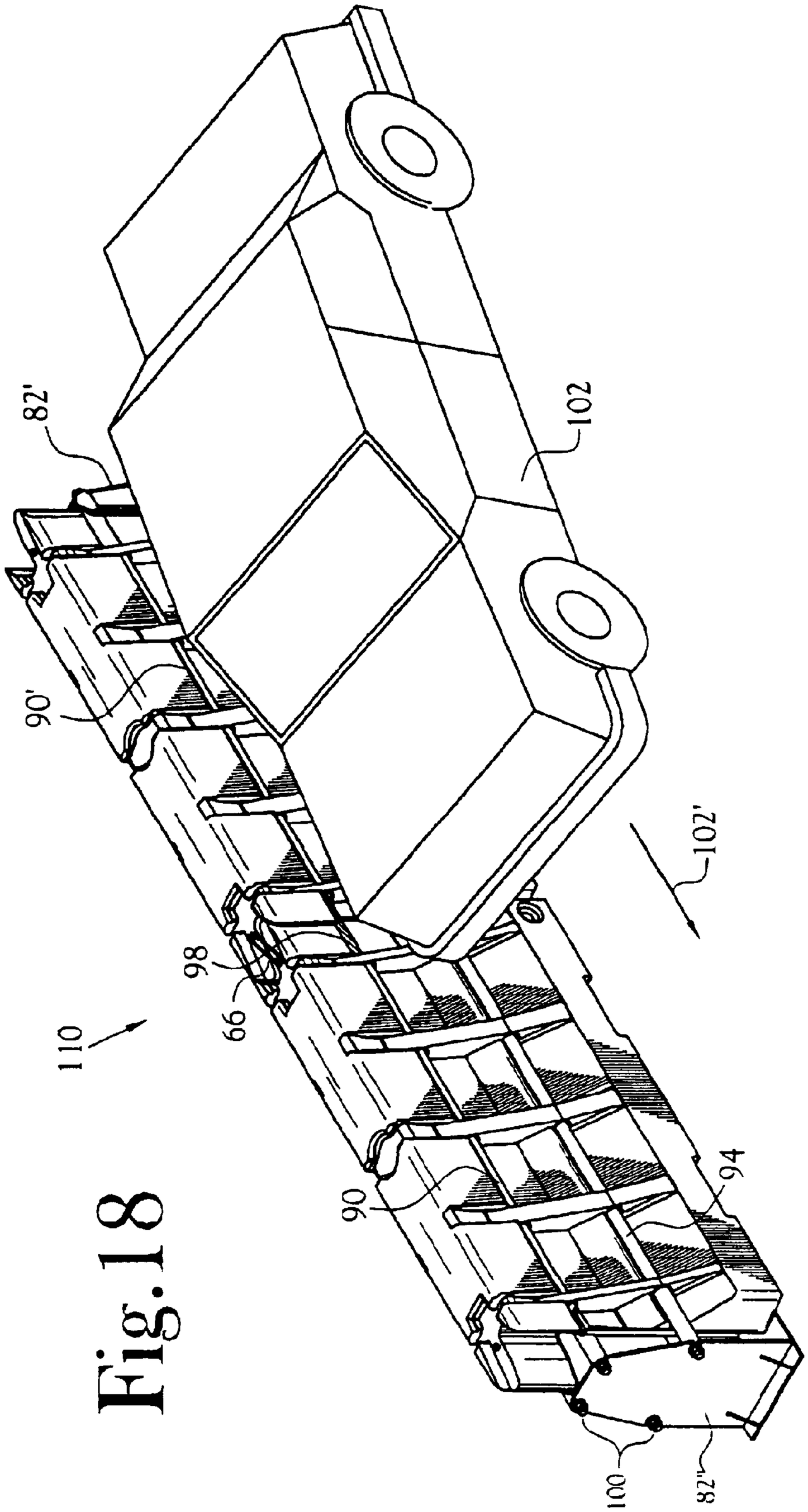

Fig. 18

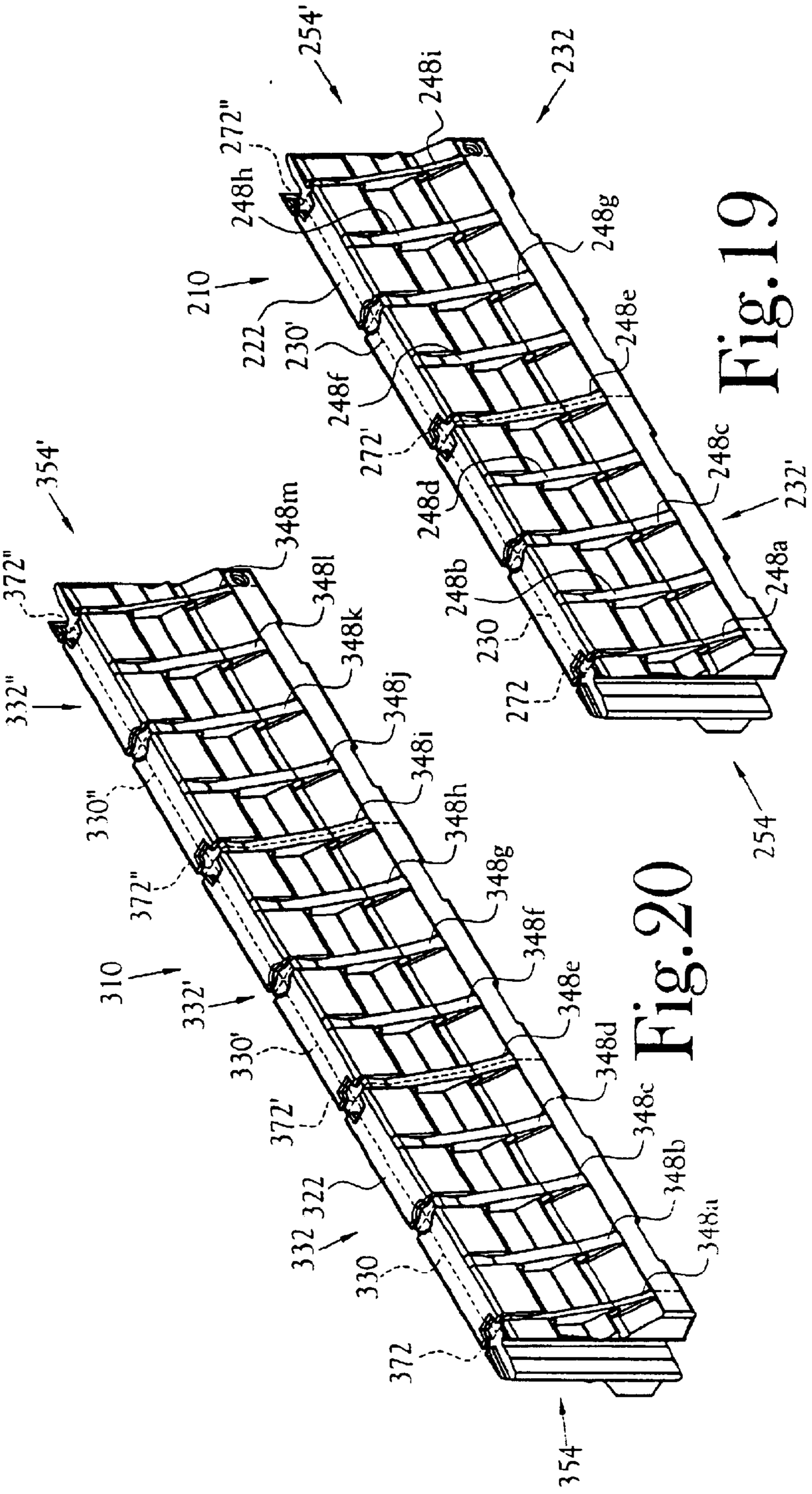
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Fig. 19

Fig. 20

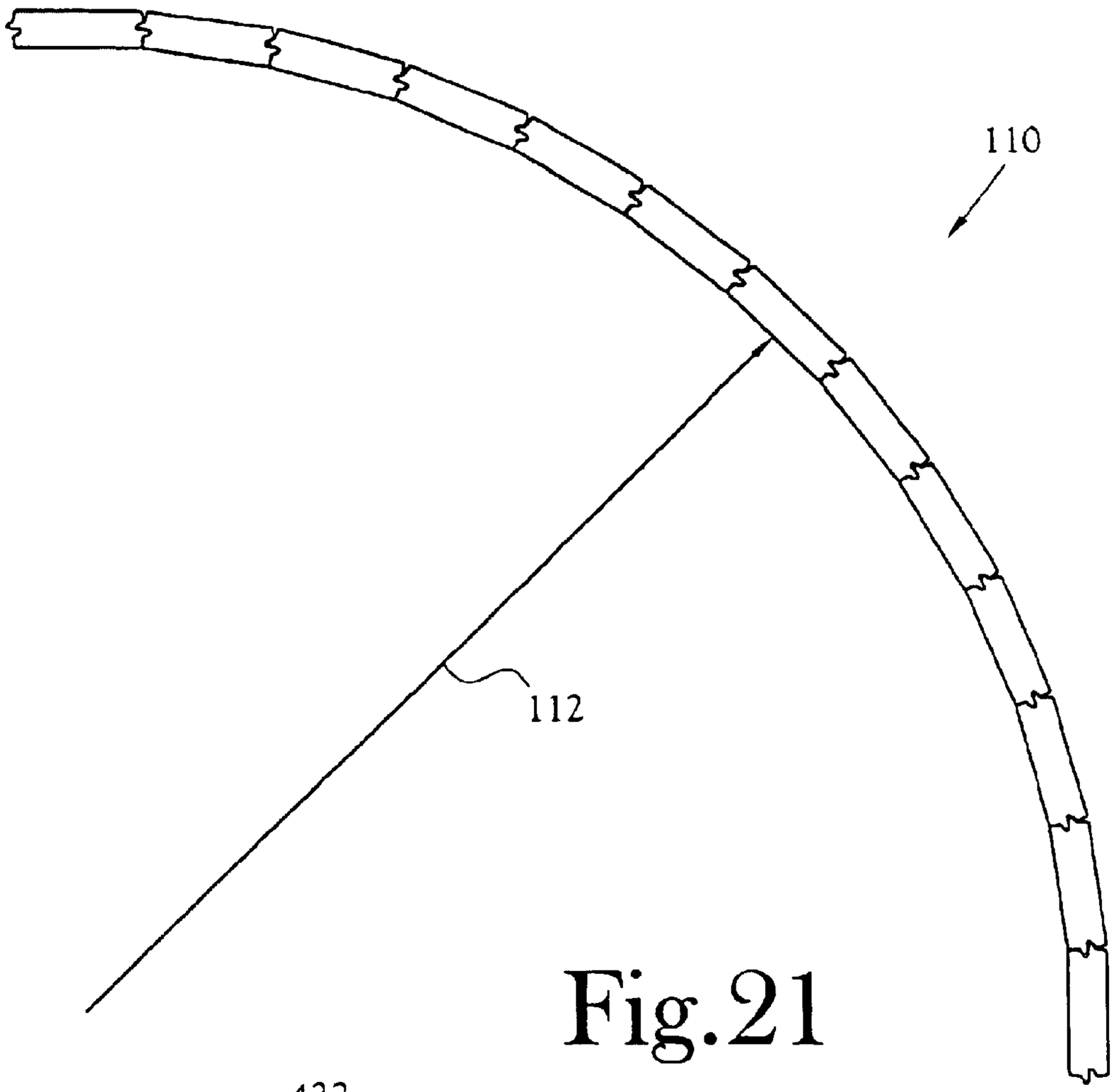

Fig.21

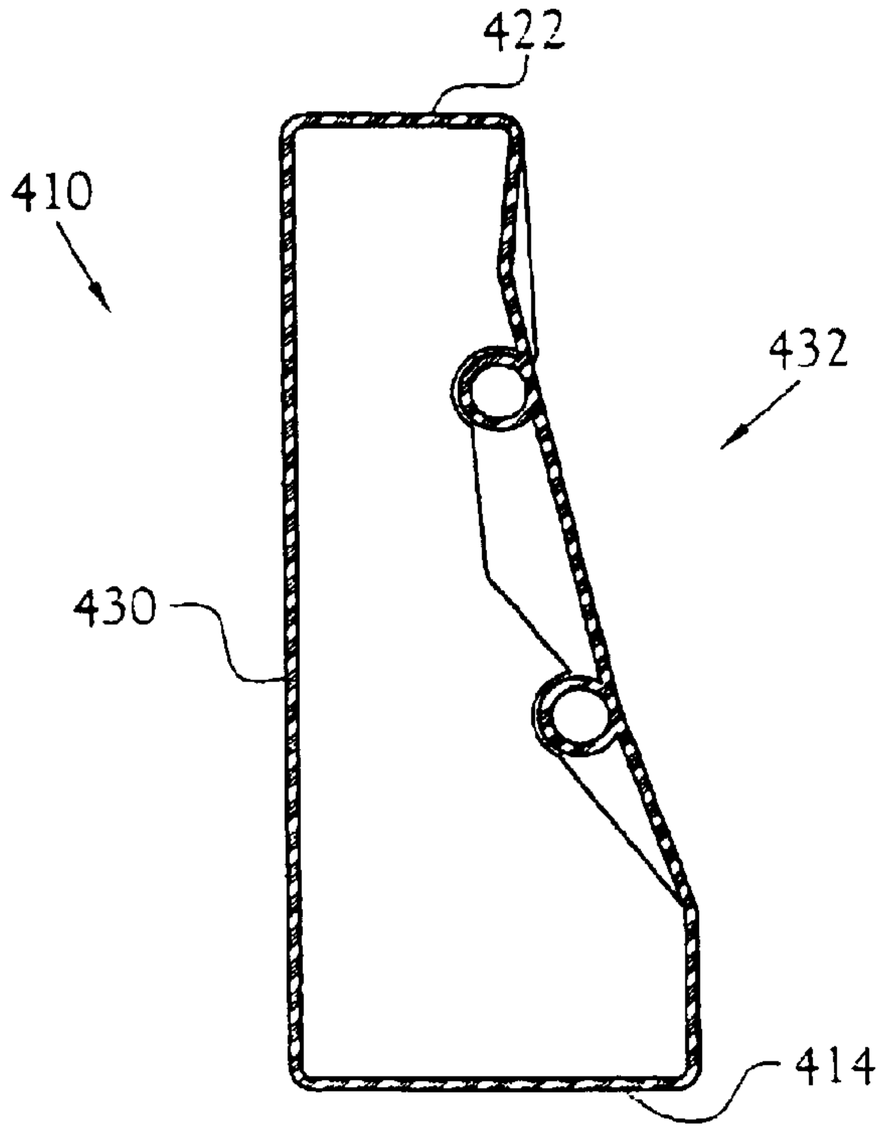

Fig.22

PROTECTION BARRIER SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This Application is a divisional of application Ser. No. 10/339,237, filed Jan. 9, 2003 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,669,402.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

This invention pertains to temporary barriers utilized for channeling of vehicles and protection of workers along roads. More particularly, this invention pertains to movable energy-absorbing barriers having a plurality of configurations providing multiple levels of collision protection.

2. Description of the Related Art

Safety barriers are utilized along roadways and near building construction sites to channel vehicles past construction areas in order to minimize vehicle intrusion into worker occupied areas for protection of workers from vehicle impacts. Prior safety barriers typically include portable containers composed of semi-rigid plastic material formed into various shapes that are generally light-weight for transport between work sites, but can be filled with sand or water during use as a stationary barrier. Prior elongated safety barriers include end portions that are generally planar to allow end-to-end positioning of rectangular shaped barriers. A vehicle can penetrate through a line of prior safety barriers at any uncoupled end junction upon impact at or near the end junction, with a significant risk of intrusion into a worker occupied area.

A prior art safety barrier is illustrated in FIGS. **1–3**, with the barrier including differently configured, opposed end surfaces that must mate with a second barrier end having a reversed configuration. The differently configured first end and second end surfaces of the prior art barriers typically require an end post or a locking pin to be manipulated through a second end slot or hole of a second barrier end. If the supporting surface is uneven, such as broken pavement, the first barrier end post or locking pin may not fit into an inadequately mated second end slot or hole. A vehicle impacting the prior art barriers positioned end-to-end can break through at the inadequately mated barrier ends without a significant amount of energy absorption by either end of the prior art barriers. Therefore, a vehicle can penetrate through the prior art barriers and into a worker occupied zone while retaining significant momentum.

A protection barrier system is needed that provides rapid assembly and disassembly of like-configured barrier ends, regardless of barrier length and without assembly disruption due to uneven supporting surfaces. There is a need for a protection barrier system that includes a barrier having side wall surfaces which distribute the force of a side impact along the side wall surfaces to minimize breaching of the barrier. A further need is a barrier system which supports a supplemental energy-absorbing system utilized with a plurality of like-configured nested barriers to provide energy-absorption and impact force distribution over numerous side wall surfaces of the plurality of like-configured nested barriers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to one embodiment of the present invention, a protection barrier system is disclosed having a plurality of uses including channeling of vehicular traffic, providing energy-absorption and containment of vehicular impacts,

controlling crowds, delineating parking areas, and providing a secure perimeter around buildings. The protection barrier system includes an elongated barrier defining a chamber therein. The barrier includes first and second side walls having a plurality of non-vertical wall segments disposed thereon. A plurality of buttresses are positioned vertically at spaced apart locations along each side wall. At least one guide channel is carried by each side wall, with the guide channel being positioned in horizontal alignment with similar guide channels on like-configured barriers. A like-configured coupling is disposed on each opposed end of the barrier, with the coupling for connecting of either barrier end juxtaposed in end-to-end arrangement with like-configured barriers. One embodiment of the side wall includes the plurality of non-vertical wall segments being connected to define a continuous side wall surface having an upper guide channel and a lower guide channel, with each guide channel disposed horizontally along each side wall surface. Each buttress includes an upper opening and a lower opening aligned with respective upper and lower guide channels of the side walls. The upper and lower guide channels provide improved energy-absorbing and impact force distribution for lateral channeling of a vehicle upon impact with the barrier. The like-configured coupling on each barrier end is removably coupled with a like-configured coupling on the first end or the second end of a similar configured barrier to provide end-to-end nesting of a selected length of similar configured barriers oriented in a straight or a curved orientation. A supplemental energy-absorbing system is detachably connectable between opposed ends of a plurality of end-to-end nested barriers. Aligned upper and lower tubes are removably insertable through each upper and lower guide channel of respective barrier side walls, and upper and lower cables are inserted through the tubes. The upper and lower cables are fixed at the opposed, non-nested ends of the barriers by connecting to end connector members that provide support and tension for each cable extended through the upper and lower tubes of end-to-end nested barriers. The energy of a vehicle impacting the barrier is absorbed by the side walls and the supplemental energy-absorbing system, thereby channeling a vehicle along respective side walls of nested barriers to deter a vehicle from passing over or breaching the coupled ends of the end-to-end nested barriers. A method of manufacture for the protection barrier is also disclosed herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

The above-mentioned features of the invention will become more clearly understood from the following detailed description of the invention read together with the drawings in which:

FIG. **1** is a side view of a prior art safety barrier;

FIG. **2** is a perspective side view illustrating one end of the prior art safety barrier of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a perspective side view illustrating an opposed end of the prior art safety barrier of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of a protection barrier system of the present invention, illustrating one embodiment of a protection barrier;

FIG. **5** is a side view of the protection barrier of FIG. **4**, illustrating the side wall structure of the barrier;

FIG. **6** is a top view of the protection barrier of FIG. **5**, illustrating the relationship of a tongue protrusion and a groove in both ends of the barrier;

FIG. **7***a* is a section view along **7***a*–**7***a* of FIG. **6**, illustrating a plurality of wall segments of the side wall surface of the barrier;

FIG. **7***b* is a section view along **7***b*–**7***b* of FIG. **6**, illustrating the relationship of a buttress and a plurality of channels on each side wall surface;

FIG. **8***a* is a detailed side view of an upper channel depicted in FIG. **7***a;*

FIG. **8***b* is a detailed side view of a lower channel depicted in FIG. **7***a;*

FIG. **9** is a top view of the ends of two barriers nested end-to-end;

FIG. **10** is a perspective view of an end connector depicted in FIG. **9**;

FIG. **11** is a top view of one end of a barrier depicted in FIG. **4**;

FIG. **12** is an exploded view of a barrier depicted in FIG. **4**;

FIG. **13** is a perspective view of protection barriers connectable end-to-end and having a supplemental energy-absorbing system attachable thereto;

FIG. **14** is a perspective view of a end connector attached to cables of the supplemental energy-absorbing system depicted in FIG. **13**;

FIG. **15** is an exploded view of the end connector of FIG. **14**;

FIG. **16** is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the end connector of FIG. **15**;

FIG. **17** is a perspective view of an additional alternative embodiment of the barrier and end connector of FIG. **14**;

FIG. **18** is a perspective view of protection barriers connected end-to-end and having the energy-absorbing system attached to channel a vehicle laterally along the length of the side walls of end-to-end nested protection barriers;

FIG. **19** is a perspective view of one alternative embodiment of the protection barrier of FIG. **4**;

FIG. **20** is a perspective view of an additional alternative embodiment of the protection barrier of FIG. **4**;

FIG. **21** is a perspective view of a plurality of like-configured barriers connected in a curved orientation; and

FIG. **22** is an end view of an additional embodiment of the protection barrier of FIG. **7***b*.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A protection barrier system **10** is disclosed having a plurality of configurations to provide multiple levels of protection during use for channeling vehicular traffic, providing impact energy-absorption as roadway barriers, controlling crowds, delineating parking areas, and providing security around buildings. The protection barrier system **10** is illustrated in FIG. **4** and includes an elongated barrier **12** having a hollow interior **12'** enclosed by a base **14**, a top surface **22**, a first side wall **32**, a second side wall **32'**, a first end **54** and a like-configured second end **54'**. The elongated barrier **12** is connectable end-to-end by nesting of either end **54**, **54'** with additional like-configured ends of similar configured protection barriers to form a plurality of barriers aligned in straight or curved orientations. The length of each barrier **12** can be increased during a production process to provide alternative lengths (see FIGS. **12** and **13**) depending on the use. During assembly of a plurality of interconnected barriers, each protection barrier can be fortified with an impact reinforcement system having additional energy-absorbing members **80** that are removably insertable through either side wall or both side walls **32**, **32'** of each barrier **12** for use along rural roads, along highway work zones, and in dense traffic zones where frequent barrier impacts are anticipated.

One embodiment of the elongated barrier **12** includes a generally upright shape having a base **14** that is wider than the top surface **22**. The outer walls of the barrier **12** are formed of a polyethylene material of selected thickness **12"** (see FIGS. **8***a* and **8***b*) and density in order to provide a substantially rigid shape having an outer surface layer that is generally resistant to degradation from the weather. The barrier **12** provides an energy-absorbing barrier having an empty weight in a range of between about 50 pounds to about 200 pounds. The lower weight range for the barrier **12** is due to a polyethylene wall thickness of about 3⁄16 inch for each surface of the barrier **12**. A barrier **12** having a lighter weight of about 50 pounds to about 100 pounds is utilized for controlling pedestrians, controlling crowds at public gatherings, and for delineating parking areas. The upper weight range is due to a polyethylene wall thickness of about ½ inch for each surface of the barrier **12**. A barrier **12** having a heavier weight of greater than about 100 pounds is utilized for channeling vehicular traffic, providing impact energy-absorption as roadway barriers, and providing security around buildings. In order to meet and exceed the highway barrier certification standards provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for speed zones of 42 mph or higher, one embodiment for the barrier **12** includes a polyethylene wall thickness of between about ¼ inch to about ½ inch, and a height of about forty-two inches from the base **14** to the top surface **22**. For additional uses such as crowd control, parking area delineation, building security barriers and/or police and fire security barriers, the height of alternative barriers can vary in a range from about thirty inches in height to about forty-eight inches in height. A standard width of the base **14** between the lower base segment **34** of the first side **32** and the opposed lower base segment **34'** of the second side **32'** is about twenty-four inches, with alternative embodiments having a base width in a range from about twenty inches to about thirty inches. An outer width of the top surface **22** is about ten inches to about twelve inches in width. Each upper side edge of the barrier **12** is rounded at about an inch radius in a preferred embodiment, therefore the substantially planar portion of the top surface **22** is about ten inches in width.

The barrier **12** illustrated in FIGS. **4**–**6** is formed by a rotational molding production process utilizing four segments of molded and shaped polyethylene material formed into two identical side walls **32**, **32'** that are joined along part line **30**, and two like-configured ends **54**, **54'** that are joined at part lines **72**, **72'** at opposed ends of the joined side walls **32**, **32'**. An axial length of the hollow interior **12'** between the base of the first end **54** and the second end **54'** includes at least three alternative lengths for the barrier **12** depending on the use. A first length for the barrier **12** includes an overall length (OAL) of about seven feet, six inches (89.5 inches), and includes a nested length of about 81.25 inches when each end **54**, **54'** is connected to a like-configured end of similar configured barriers **110** (see FIG. **13**). The first length is formed by the step of joining two identical side walls **32**, **32'**, combined with a step of bonding identical ends **54**, **54'** to opposed ends of the side walls **32**, **32'**. A second length for a barrier **210** (see FIG. **19**) includes an OAL of about thirteen feet, three inches, and a nested length of about twelve feet, six inches. The second length is formed by at least one step of joining two identical side wall sections **32**, **32** end-to-end to form one side, repeating the step of joining for two identical side wall sections **32'**, **32'** end-to-end to form the second side wall section, and a step of bonding identical ends **54**, **54'** to opposed ends of the side wall sections. A third length for the barrier **310** (see FIG. **20**)

includes an OAL of about nineteen feet, zero inches, and a nested length of about eighteen feet, four inches. The third length is formed by at least two steps of joining three identical side wall sections **32**, **32**, **32** end-to-end to form one side wall section, repeating the step of joining for three identical side wall sections **32'**, **32'**, **32'** end-to-end to form the second side wall section, and a step of bonding identical ends **54**, **54'** to opposed ends of the side wall sections. The joining and bonding steps can be accomplished during molding by using heat, pressure, and/or adhesive compounds utilizing techniques for joining polyethylene materials or similar materials that are fluid when heated and become rigid when cooled as known to those skilled in the art.

The base **14** includes bottom surface features that facilitate the movement of each barrier **12** between sites of use without excessive wear on the polyethylene exterior surfaces. Two elongated slots **16**, **16"** originate in the lower base segment **34** and extend as channels through the lower surface of the base **14** to slots **16'**, **16'"** (not shown) in the lower base segment **34'** of the second side wall **32'** (identical in FIG. **4** to first side wall **32**). The width of each slot is sized to allow a pair of forks of a forklift to be inserted through and under the base **14** for lifting the barrier **12** to a preferred position along a roadway, or for lifting onto a truck for transport to a second location. In order to drain any ballast from the interior chamber or hollow interior **12'**, and to reduce the mass of the barrier **12** during transport, drain holes **18**, **18'** that are stoppered by replaceable plug **20** (see FIG. **4**), and second plug **20'** (see FIG. **5**), are provided at opposed corners of the junction of the base **14** and each end **54**, **54'**, as illustrated in FIGS. **4** and **5**.

The barrier **12** is preferably formed out of polyethylene material by a method of manufacture and assembly, such as a rotational molding production method. In the preferred embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **7***a* and **7***b*, the thickness of each wall of the barrier **12** is about 5/16 inches. One embodiment includes a hollow interior cavity that extends through a lower portion of the barrier **12**. A preferred embodiment provides a hollow interior cavity **12'** that extends through a substantial portion of the lower and upper portions of the barrier **12** (see FIGS. **7***a* and **7***b*). The interior cavity **12'** is substantially leak-tight for receiving and retaining liquid or granular ballast material such as liquid mixtures of water and anti-freezing agents, foam materials, or granular solids such as sand. The liquid or granular ballast material increases the mass of the barrier **12** to improve energy absorption of a vehicle impact, while maintaining the height of the center of gravity at a level of about 16.0 inches to about 16.7 inches above the bottom surface of the base **1** to minimize overturning of the barrier **12**. The interior ballast, whether liquid, foam, or granular materials, is added through inlet **24'** (see FIG. **6**) disposed within the central indentation **24** on the top surface **22**. Any liquids or granular materials exceeding the fill-volume are directed by indentation **24** to drain laterally along drain channel **28**, **28'** (see FIGS. **4–6**). A removable plug **26** is provided to cover inlet **24'** between additions of liquid, foam or granular ballast. The barrier **12** can be utilized without ballast materials therein for use in areas where low-energy impacts with barriers are expected along roads having speed limits of about **35** miles per hour or less. A preferred height of the center of gravity for a fluid filled barrier **12** is about 16.0 inches to about 16.7 inches above a bottom surface of the base **14**. With the addition or draining of ballast, the height of the center of gravity of the barrier **12** can be adjusted depending on the anticipated need for energy absorption by barriers impacted by vehicles along roads where frequent vehicle impacts are anticipated.

In one embodiment of the barrier **12**, both first side wall **32** and second side wall **32'** have a similar configuration. For each side wall **32**, **32'**, a plurality of non-vertical wall segments include a lower impact zone and an upper impact zone that are disposed between a lower base segment **34** that is vertically oriented above the base **14**, and the rounded side edge of top surface **22**. One skilled in the art will recognize that the dimensions of the preferred embodiment described herein for the side wall **32** can vary within a range of height dimensions that may be modified during the method of manufacture and assembly to meet the anticipated uses of each barrier. The preferred embodiment includes the lower base segment **34** extended from a rounded corner at the base **14** to a height of about 7.7 inches to about 8.0 inches above the base **14**. The lower base segment **34** can be angled inwardly at a slight angle, or can be oriented generally vertical from the base **14**. The lower impact zone includes a lower angled segment **36** extended from a connection with the lower base segment **34** at a height of about 7.7 inches to about 8.0 inches above the base **14**, to connect with a lower portion of a curved lower guide channel **38** at a height of between about 14.6 inches to about 14.8 inches above the base **14**. The inwardly oriented angle of the lower angled segment **36** is between about 40 degrees to about 50 degrees. An inwardly curved surface **96** of the lower guide channel **38** has a radius of between about 1.4 inches radius to about 1.5 inches radius. The center of the curved surface **96** and the lower guide channel **38** are between about 16 inches to about 16.2 inches above the base **14**. The curved surface **96** is curved for a circumference that approximates a half circle (i.e. about 180 degrees along the inwardly curved surface **96**)(see FIG. **8***b*). An upper boundary of guide channel **38**, at a height of between about 17.5 inches to about 17.7 inches, is connected to a lower overhang **40"** of a middle angled segment **40** that extends upwards at an inwardly oriented angle of between about 40 degrees to about 50 degrees. The lower impact zone is generally bounded by the lower overhang **40"**, and the curved surface **96** within channel **38**, which are designed to be positioned at a height predicted to align the overhang **40"** and lower guide channel **38** with the approximate height of the bumper of a small vehicle. The lower impact zone is positioned at the height of between 16 inches and 18 inches above the road surface for receiving of an initial impact from a bumper of a small vehicle to direct the vehicle laterally along the side wall **32** instead of up and over the barrier **12**.

The upper impact zone includes the middle angled segment **40** connected with a middle sloped segment **42** at a height above the base **14** in a range of between about 22.0 inches to about 22.5 inches. The sloped segment **42** extends at an upwardly and inwardly oriented angle of between about 75 degrees to about 85 degrees. The middle sloped segment **42** connects at an upper end with a lower curved portion of an upper guide channel **44** at a height of between about 28.4 inches to about 28.7 inches above the base **14**. The upper guide channel **44** includes upper curved surface **92** having a radius of between about 1.4 inches radius to about 1.5 inches radius that is about 30.0 inches to about 30.2 inches above the base **14**. The upper portion of curved surface **92** and guide channel **44** is bounded by upper overhang **46"**, at a height of between about 31.4 inches to about 31.6 inches above the base **14**. The upper boundary of curved surface **92** is extended for a circumference of about a half circle or greater than a half circle (i.e. about 180 degrees along the inwardly curved surface **92**)(see FIG. **8***a*), from the lower curved portion of upper guide channel **44**, to accentuate the upper overhang **46"** extending laterally from

upper sloped segment **46**. The upper sloped segment **46** extends upwards and inwardly at an angle of between about 80 degrees to about 85 degrees to connect with the curved side edge of top surface **22** at a height of between about 41.0 inches to about 42.0 inches above the base **14**. The upper guide channel **44** and upper overhang **46**" are positioned at a height predicted to provide the guide channel **44** and overhang **46**" as an upper boundary for an initial impact along the side wall **32** by a bumper of a large vehicle. Upper guide channel **44** and upper overhang **46**" will preferably direct a large vehicle laterally along the side wall **32** instead of up and over the barrier **12**. The barrier **12** provides improved work zone protection by the upper guide channel **44** engaging the bumper of a vehicle **102** during a side wall impact and the upper curved surface **92** restricting the bumper of a large or small vehicle from moving above overhang **46**". The upper and lower impact zones of the side wall **32** channel a vehicle's impact in a lateral direction **102**' along the barrier **12**, therefore reducing the likelihood of a vehicle **102** moving over the barrier **12**.

The plurality of non-vertical wall segments include wall segments having different angles and slopes **36**, **40**, **42**, **46**, and includes curved guide channels **38**, **44**, that provide a convoluted surface possessing a greater ability to absorb and dissipate energy from a side wall impact than previous straight wall barriers, or prior barriers having a single side wall curvature or having one angle for the side wall surface. The plurality of non-vertical wall segments of one embodiment of the protection barrier **12** (see FIG. **4**), are connected end-to-end in water-tight connection to define side walls **32**, **32**' that are each upwardly angled as the plurality of wall segments extend from the base **14** to the top surface **22** of the barrier. The upwardly angled side walls **32**, **32**' extend from a wide base **14** and provide a barrier **12** having a low center of gravity when the interior chamber **12**' is filled with liquid or granular ballast, allowing the barrier **12** to be preferably moved laterally during a side impact instead of being pushed over upon impact.

Additional rigidity for each side wall **32**, **32**' is provided by at least two buttresses **48***a*, **48***e* disposed vertically at spaced apart locations between the first end **54** and the second end **54**'. A preferred embodiment, illustrated in FIGS. **4**–**6**, includes five vertical buttresses **48***a*–**48***e* disposed a spaced apart distance apart between the first end **54** and the second end **54**'. Each buttress **48***a*–**48***e* is formed during the production process to be positioned vertically at spaced apart locations along each side wall surface. The buttresses **48***a*–**48***e* are extended laterally from each side wall surface so that the outer edge surface of each buttress (see FIGS. **7***a* and **7***b*) is generally disposed laterally outwards of the side wall surface along a mid-portion of the plurality of non-vertical wall segments including the surfaces extending from the lower angled segment **36** to the overhang **46**" (see FIG. **4**, **5**, **7***a* and **7***b*). The outer disposed buttresses **48***a*, **48***e* near to the opposed barrier ends **54**, **54**', have a width of about one and one-half inches. The inwardly disposed buttresses **48***b*–**48***d* have a width of about three inches. In one embodiment, each vertical buttress includes at least one hole **50** therethrough. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **4**, each respective buttress includes holes **50***a*–**50***e* horizontally aligned a selected distance above the base **14**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **4**, **5** and **7***a*–**8***b* and **13**, two sets of holes are disposed through each buttress. An upper hole **50** and a lower hole **52** are positioned respectively through an upper portion and a lower portion of each buttress for each side wall **32**, **32**'. The respective upper holes **50** are aligned horizontally along the upper guide channel **44** of each side wall **32**, **32**'. The lower holes **52** are aligned horizontally along the lower guide channel **38** of each side wall **32**, **32**'. For additional side wall rigidity, an adequately sized tube **90** is removably inserted through each upper hole **50** and upper guide channel **44** (see FIGS. **8***a* and **13**). A similar adequately sized tube **94** is removably inserted through each lower hole **52** and the lower guide channel **38** (see FIGS. **8***b* and **13**). The upper tube **90** and lower tube **94** remain horizontally aligned through each respective buttress **48***a*–**48***e*, providing supplemental energy-absorption during an impact by a vehicle **102** against each side wall **32**, **32**' as discussed further herein.

The barrier **12** includes each end **54**, **54**' including a coupling having elements providing interconnection means for connecting a plurality of like-configured barriers end-to-end. The elements of the coupling are disposed on each opposed barrier end to form the barrier ends **54**, **54**' joined along respective part lines **72**, **72**' to each end portion of like-configured side walls **32**, **32**'. The elements for the coupling provide interconnection means for releasably interlocking either like-configured end **54**, **54**' of a first barrier **12** with either like-configured end **54** or **54**' of a similar configured barriers **12** (see FIG. **13**). A plurality of like-configured barriers **12** can be releasably mated together in end-to-end alignment to provide barriers positioned along a roadside in generally straight orientation and/or positioned in a curved orientation **110** (see FIGS. **13**, **17** and **20**). The like-configured ends **54**, **54**' are mirror configurations and allow rapid coupling by mating ends **54**, **54**', or ends **54**, **54** of like-configured barriers **12** without assembly disruption due to uneven supporting roadway surfaces.

One component of the coupling includes a receiving channel or groove **58** that extends vertically within each end **54**, **54**' (see FIGS. **9** and **11**). The groove **58** can extend either a partial distance from the base **14** to approximately a mid-portion of the ends **54**, **54**', or the groove **58** can extend along an upper portion of each end **54**, **54**' from the mid-section to approximately the top surface **22**. A preferred embodiment for the groove **58** includes a vertical extension along substantially the full height of each end from the base **14** to an end channel **62** recessed in each upper end of the top surface **22** (see FIG. **4**). A second component of the coupling includes a tongue **56** protruding from each end **54**, **54**' at a distance F of about 5.6 inches from one corner of each end **54**, **54**'. The distance E of protrusion from each end **54**, **54**' is about 3.7 inches along an outwardly faced curved surface extended to a tongue end **56**'. The tongue **56** also protrudes about 3.5 inches along an inner faced curved surface from the opening **60** of the groove **58**. The inner faced curved surface of tongue **56** is contiguous with an inner portion of the groove **58**, forming an inner side boundary of the groove **58**. The tongue **56** and the adjacent groove **58** extend vertically from the base **14** to the end channel **62** in the top surface **22**. An end width A is about 24 inches for each top portion of each end **54**, **54**', as measured across each end channel **62** (see FIGS. **9** and **11**). Distance G of about 4.2 inches forms the depth of each corner of each end **54**, **54**' from respective part lines **72**, **72**' (see FIG. **11**).

The protrusion end **56**' of the tongue **56** is shaped to mate in engaging relationship with a groove **58** of a like-configured barrier end **54**, **54**' in end-to-end orientation of two or more nested barriers **110** (see FIGS. **9** and **17**). The groove **58** is generally a rounded "V" shape that includes first side C of about 4.7 inches in length, and second side D of about 3.5 inches in length (see FIG. **11**). The first side C and second side D of each groove **58** are non-linear and have changing or involute curvatures providing angles of sepa-

ration which vary for each of an inner portion **58'**, a middle portion **58"**, and an outer portion **58'"**. When viewed in cross-section, as illustrated in FIG. **11**, the opposed side segments of the groove inner portion **58'** have an angle of separation between about 41 degrees to about 42 degrees. The opposed side segments of the groove middle portion **58"** have an angle of separation between about 27 degrees to about 28 degrees. The opposed side segments of the groove outer portion **58'"** have an angle of separation **60** (see FIG. **6**) of between about 42 degrees to about 43 degrees. The various angles of separation for the groove **58** allow the insertion end **56'** of a tongue **56** having an angled width of about 27 degrees or less to be releasably nested into the inner portion **58'** of the groove **58** of either end **54, 54'** of a second barrier **12**. A first outer corner of groove **58** is disposed a width B of about 5.5 inches inwardly from one outer corner of the end **54**. The outer angled surface of tongue **56** is disposed a width F of about 5.6 inches from the second outer corner of the end **54** (see FIG. **11**).

Each opposed outer corner of each end **54, 54'** are complementary edges disposed in angled configuration to permit hinged movement of each end **54, 54'** when nested together. Each outer corner of respective nested barriers includes a beveled edge having an angle **68** of about 7.5 degrees less than a generally squared corner. An alternative embodiment for each opposed outer corner of each end **54, 54'** can include a beveled surface having an alternative angle selected from a range of angles of about 7.5 degrees to about 15 degrees less than a generally squared corner. Upon insertion of tongue **56** of a first barrier end **54** into a groove **58** of a second barrier end, the angles **68** of each beveled edge of ends **54, 54'** provide for pivotable movement **70** of the tongue **56** of one barrier end **54** relative to a groove **58** of a second barrier end **54** or **54'**. The beveled corners of each end **54, 54'** provide for pivotable movement **70** of about 7.5 degrees to about 15 degrees of pivoting movement for the barrier end **54** relative to the second barrier end **54** or **54'** when nested end-to-end. The range of pivotable movement **70** (see FIG. **9**) of about 7.5 degrees to about 15 degrees of pivoting movement for coupled, barrier ends will allow about thirteen barriers (see FIG. **21**), to form a ninety degree change of direction having a radius **112** varying on the nested length of each individual barrier (see FIGS. **4, 18–21**).

As illustrated in FIG. **9**, the nested barrier ends **54** and **54,** or barrier ends **54** and **54'**, are maintained in an interconnected, nesting relationship while allowing for a degree of pivotable movement **70**. A nesting relationship of a tongue **56** of a first barrier end **54** is retained in a coupled, nesting relationship in a groove **58** of a second barrier end **54** by removably attaching an end connector member **66** having a single keyhole end (not shown), or preferably having double keyhole openings in opposed ends of an elongated slot **67** (see FIG. **10**). A first keyhole opening **66"** is defined within a rounded first connector end **66'**. A second keyhole opening **66""** is defined within a rounded second connector end **66'"**. When two or more barriers are nested end-to-end, the first keyhole opening **66"** of the first connector end **66'** is pivotably disposed on a channel post **64** of the first barrier end **54**. The width of elongated slot **67** is approximately the width of a base diameter of the channel post **64**. Each channel post **64** includes an outer flanged end having an outer diameter that is less than the diameter of either first keyhole opening **66"** and second keyhole opening **66""**, but the channel post outer diameter is greater than the width of elongated slot **67**. The second keyhole opening **66""** of the second connector end **66'"** is pivotably disposed on a channel post **64** of a like-configured second barrier end **54** or **54'**. Upon placement of the end connector member **66** around respective channel posts **64, 64** of nested barrier ends **54, 54'**, a range of pivotable movement **70** is allowed for the movement of tongue **56** in groove **58** without each barrier end **54, 54'** becoming disengaged. The end connector member **66** is composed of polyethylene material, a metal, or a comparable rigid material that retains its shape when the barrier ends **54, 54'** are pivotably moved within a range of pivotable movement **70** for each pair of nested barrier ends (see FIG. **9**). When the barrier ends **54, 54'** are not nested together, the end connector member **66** is pivotable within the end channel **62** of either barrier end **54** or **54'** and is retractable toward either channel drain indentation **62', 62"** (see phantom depiction for connector member **66** in FIG. **9**).

One embodiment of the protection barrier system **10** is illustrated in FIGS. **13–15**, providing for the addition of a supplemental energy-absorbing system **80** to one or more nested barriers **110** that are aligned end-to-end. The energy-absorbing system **80** includes members that are extended through respective guide channels **38, 44** and holes **50, 52** in either or both sides **32, 32'** of the nested barriers **110** (see FIGS. **13** and **14**). Installation of the energy-absorbing system **80** provides the nested barriers **110** with additional energy-adsorbing capabilities and improved means for distributing impact forces along the side wall **32** or **32'** upon impact by any of a variety of vehicle sizes and shapes.

An alternative embodiment for the barrier **12** is illustrated in FIG. **17**, depicting an alternative barrier **130** having a plurality of non-vertical wall segments **132, 132'** disposed along the opposed wall surfaces, but without the plurality of buttresses formed into each side wall surfaces. Each side wall surface includes: a lower base segment **134**, a lower angled segment **136**, a lower guide channel **138**, a middle angled segment **140**, a middle sloped segment **142**, an upper guide channel **144**, and an upper sloped segment **146**. The barrier **130** includes opposed wall surfaces without buttresses thereon for use in controlling pedestrians, controlling crowds at public gatherings, for delineating parking areas, and for roadside uses where speeds are typically less than about 35 mph. The barrier **130** can be filled with liquid or granular ballast disposed through an access port **124** (cover not shown), and drained from a drain hole **118** (plug not shown). The barrier **130** can be utilized without ballast therein to provide a light-weight, easily positioned barrier. The barrier **130** includes opposed ends **154, 154'** with couplings having a tongue protrusion **156** and a groove **158** that allow either end **154, 154'** to be coupled in end-to-end nested configuration with either end **154, 154'** of a like-configured barrier **130** (without side wall buttresses), or with either end **54, 54'** of barrier **110** (having side wall buttresses). Another alternative barrier includes a barrier configured as illustrated in FIG. **12**, with two or more buttresses but without an upper hole **50** or a lower hole **52** through each buttress. The alternative barrier, lacking upper holes **50** or lower holes **52** in each buttress, is coupled end-to-end with like-configured ends of similar barriers, but without cables or tubes extended through each respective barrier side wall. The alternative barrier is utilized by positioning adjacent and parallel to, either in front of or behind, similar barriers to provide a plurality of barrier layers for impact absorption without cables or tubes extended through the barrier side walls.

As illustrated in FIG. **13**, the energy-absorbing system **80** includes a pair of end connector brackets **82, 82'**, also identified as an end bridle members **82, 82'**, that provide a connector bracket and anchor for a plurality of cable ends

that are extended through respective guide channels **38**, **44** and holes **50**, **52** in each barrier of the end-to-end nested barriers **110**. The first end bridle member **82** is positioned at one, non-nested end **54** of a plurality of nested barriers **110**. A second, like-configured, end connector bracket **82'** is positioned at a distal, second non-nested end **54'** of the plurality of nested barriers **110**. The end bridle members **82**, **82'** are configured as identical connector members composed of metal and including upper guide conduits **84**, **84'** and lower guide conduits **86**, **86'** extending laterally from the support member **82"** (see FIG. **15**). An arcuate plate **88** or **88'** is positioned against respective end bridle members **82**, **82'**. The arcuate plate **88** or **88'** is composed of rigid polyethylene or metal and is disposed between the end bridle members **82**, **82'** and each respective tongue **56** and groove **58** of the opposed and unconnected ends **54**, **54'** of the plurality of end-to-end nested barriers **110**. In one embodiment of the end bridle member **82**, a generally horizontal base plate **82'"** is attached at the lower edge of the generally vertical support member **82"** (see FIG. **15**), to serve as a stand positioned on a supporting surface for each end bridle member **82**, **82'**. The generally horizontal base plate **82'"** includes a base plate extension disposed on an opposed side of the generally vertical support member **82"**, with the base plate extension having two triangular supports **82""** joined against the generally vertical support member **82"** and the generally horizontal base plate **82'"**. An alternative embodiment of an end bridle member **104** (see FIG. **16**), does not include a base plate and is connected in a suspended position against respective barrier ends **54**, **54'**.

An alternative embodiment for an end connector is illustrated in FIG. **17**, including an end member **106** that is generally hemispherical in shape and is positioned at opposed ends **54**, **54'** of a plurality of end-to-end aligned nested barriers **110**. The end member **106** is composed of polyethylene materials and includes an interior chamber that can be filled with liquid or granular ballast. Each side wall portion of the end member **106** includes a plurality of non-vertical wall segments disposed at heights comparable to the like-configured side walls **32**, **32'** of nested barriers **110**. A ballast fill means includes an access hole **24"** and removable plug **26"** disposed in the top surface and a drain hole **18"** and removable plug **20"** are disposed in a lower segment of the outer curved portion **106"** of the end member **106**. The end member **106** includes a base having a width of about 24 inches, and a height selected from a range of heights of about 42 inches to about 72 inches from the base to the top of the end member **106**. The top of the end member **106** includes a channel indentation **62""** having channel post **64"** disposed therein for connecting of end connector member **66** thereto, for an end member **106** having a height of about the height of the barrier ends **54**, **54'**. An inwardly oriented arcuate side **106'** of the end member **106** includes a groove indentation **56** and groove **58** (see FIG. **17**) configured to fit into the tongue protrusion **56** and the groove **58** of either like-configured end **54**, **54'** of the opposed, non-nested ends of a plurality of nested barriers **110**. An outer curved plate **108** is disposed along the outer curved portion **106"** between an upper guide channel and a lower guide channel to provided a support to allow the respective upper cable **98** and a lower cable **98"** to wrap around the outer curved plate **108** and the outer curved portion **106"**. The end member **106** provides an end connector that is highly visible for heights of about 46 inches to about 72 inches. The end member **106** also provides an additional reservoir for liquid or granular ballast when the interior of the end member **106** is filled with ballast upon positioning at the opposed, non-nested ends **54**, **54'** of a plurality of end-to-end aligned and nested barriers **110**.

For each side wall **32**, **32'** of the nested barriers **110**, an upper tube **90** of a rigid material such as metal, or preferably a PVC pipe of about 0.187 inch to about 0.218 inch wall thickness, is removably insertable through the aligned upper holes **50**. The upper tube **90** is guided along the upper guide channel **44** created by the overhand **46"** of the upper wall segment **46**. The energy-absorbing system **80** includes at least two upper cables **98**, **98'** composed of high-strength stranded metal wire. The upper cable **98**, **98'** are extended through the upper tubes **90** on each side wall **32**, **32'** of aligned barriers. The cable ends are threaded through the respective upper guides **84**, **84'** of the first end bridle member **82** and second end bridle member **82'**, and the cable ends are secured on the outer surface of the generally vertical support member **82"** by washers and lock nuts **100**, **100'** that are known to those skilled in the art for securing ends of metal cables. Below the side wall upper overhand **46"** is a curved surface **92** formed of curved polyethylene material. The curve of the surface **92** provides a retention guide for the upper tube **90** inserted through the upper guide channel **44** and also provides for energy absorption and impact force distribution along the side wall surfaces **46** and **42** upon a side impact **102'** by a vehicle **102** against the upper tubes **90** and enclosed cables **98**, **98'** (see FIG. **18**). The height of the upper guide channel **44** and the upper tube **90** inserted therethrough, is about 30 inches to about 31 inches from the barrier base **14**. The height of the upper guide channel **44** is approximately the height of the bumper of a large-sized vehicle, to provide a plurality of surface elements such as overhang **46"**, upper tube **90**, curved contoured surface **92**, sloped segment **46** and angled segment **42**, that are crushable and/or collapsible when struck by the vehicle's bumper. The destruction and/or compression of one or more upper surface elements (**46"**, **90**, **92**, **46**, and **42**) provide a means for impact channeling and distribution of forces along the non-vertical surfaces and the vertical buttresses of the impacted side wall **32** while absorbing energy upon impact by a vehicle **102**.

Through each lower channel **38**, **38'** of each barrier side wall **32**, **32'** barrier, a lower guide tube **94** is removably insertable through the respective side wall channels. The lower tube **94** is composed of a rigid material such as metal, or preferably a PVC pipe of about 3⁄16 inch wall thickness, and is removably insertable through the aligned lower guide channel **38** and lower holes **52***a*–**52***e* in each buttress. The lower tube **94** is positioned along the lower guide channel **38** created by the overhang **40"** of the middle wall segment **40**. The energy-absorbing system **80** includes at least two lower cables **98"**, **98'"** composed of high-strength stranded metal wire. The lower cables **98"**, **98'"** are extended through the lower tubes **94** on each side wall **32**, **32'** of aligned nested barriers. The cable ends are threaded through the respective lower guides **86**, **86'** of the first end bridle member **82** and second end bridle member **82'**, and the cable ends are secured on the outer surface of the generally vertical support member **82"** by washers and lock nuts **100**, **100'** that are known to those skilled in the art for securing ends of metal cables. Below the overhang **40"** is the curved surface **96** formed of the polyethylene material of the barrier surface. The curved surface **96** provides a retention guide for the lower tube **94** inserted through the lower guide channels **38**, **38'** in each side wall **32**, **32'**, and also provides for energy absorption and force distribution along the side wall surfaces **40** and **36** upon impact by a vehicle **102** (see FIG. **18**). The height of the lower guide channel **38** and the lower tube **94**

inserted therethrough, is about 16 inches to about 16.5 inches from the barrier base **14**. The height of the lower guide channel **38** is approximately the height of the bumper of a small-sized vehicle, in order to provide a plurality of surface elements such as overhang **40"**, lower tube **94**, curved surface **96**, sloped segment **40** and angled segment **36**, that are crushable and/or collapsible when struck by a vehicle. The destruction and/or compression of one or more lower surfaces and tube elements (**40"**, **94**, **96**, **40**, and **36**) provides an impact channeling means that distributes impact forces along the plurality of non-vertical wall segments and the vertical buttresses of the impacted side wall for maximizing energy absorption by the side wall upon the impact by a vehicle **102**.

An upper guide tube **90** is composed of a rigid material such as metal, or preferably a PVC material of about 3/16 inch thickness, and is removably insertable through the aligned upper guide channel **44** and upper holes **50***a*–**50***e* in each buttress. The upper tube **90** is positioned along the upper guide channel **44** created by the overhang **46"** of the upper wall segment **46**. The energy-absorbing system **80** includes at least two upper cables **98**, **98'** composed of high-strength stranded metal wire. The upper cables **98'**, **98"** are extended through the upper tubes **90** on each side wall **32**, **32'** of aligned nested barriers. The cable ends are threaded through the respective upper guides **84**, **84'** of the first end bridle member **82** and second end bridle member **82'**, and the cable ends are secured on the outer portion of each upper guide **84**, **84'** by washers and lock nuts **100**, **100'** that are known to those skilled in the art for securing ends of metal cables. Below the overhang **46"** is the curved surface **92** formed of the polyethylene material of the barrier surface. The curved surface **92** provides a retention guide for the upper tube **90** inserted through the upper guide channel **44** and also provides for energy absorption and force distribution along the side wall surfaces **42** and **46** upon a side impact by a vehicle **102** (see FIG. **18**). The height of the upper guide channel **44** and the upper tube **90** inserted therethrough, is preferably greater than the height, or is approximately the height, of the bumper of a large-sized vehicle, to provide a plurality of surface elements such as overhang **46"**, upper tube **90**, curved surface **92**, sloped segment **42** and upper wall segment **46**, that are crushable and/or collapsible when struck by the vehicle's bumper. The destruction and/or compression of one or more lower surface or tube elements (**46"**, **90**, **92**, **42**, and **46**) provides an impact channeling means that distributes impact forces along the plurality of non-vertical wall segments and the vertical buttresses of the side wall for maximizing energy absorption by each side wall segment upon the impact by a vehicle **102**.

The individual members of the energy-absorbing system **80**, when incorporated with the plurality of non-vertical wall segments and convoluted structure of one or both side walls **32**, **32'**, provide a destructible side wall structure having tubes **90**, **94** therein that are crushable and serve to provide energy-absorption upon impact. The energy-absorbing system **80** also absorbs and distributes the energy of the impacts while laterally channeling **102'** a vehicle **102** between the lower guide channel **38** and the upper guide channel **44** of one side wall **32**. By channeling **102'** the vehicle **102** along the side walls of respective end-to-end nested barriers **110**, protection is provided for workers occupying a work zone separated by the end-to-end nested barriers **110** from passing vehicles. Further, the supplemental energy-absorbing system **80** with respective upper cables **98**, **98'** and lower cables **98"**, **98'"** inserted through respective upper guide channels **44**, **44'** and lower guide channels **38**, **38'** provide reinforcement of the appropriate barrier side wall facing a roadway where high speed vehicle impacts are common. An additional benefit includes the retention of a vehicle **102** on a roadway side of the nested barriers **110** after an impact against one or more barriers of the nested barriers **110**, thereby minimizing the opportunity for the vehicle to flip over or to break through the junction of any two coupled ends (see FIG. **18**). During the impact of a speeding vehicle with one or more aligned barriers, the impacted barriers may lose water-tight integrity with resulting loss of fluids from the interior cavity **12'**. One goal of the protection barrier system **10** and nested barriers **110** is achieved when the fluid enhanced mass of one or more water-filled barriers absorb the impact of a vehicle with minimal lateral movement of the nested barriers **110**. The energy-absorbing system **80** including one or more of cables **98**–**98'"** extended through guide channels **38**, **44** of nested barriers **110**, and tubes **90**, **94** are removably attachable through the first side wall **32** and/or the like-configured second side wall **32'** of the nested barriers **110**.

Each like-configured barrier **12** is produced by a method of manufacture including a forming process utilizing heated polyethylene material injected into an enclosing mold. The enclosing mold can include a plurality of mold segments such as side wall molds and end wall molds that are assembled together to form a barrier shell having an internal chamber upon injection of polyethylene material into the enclosing mold. A step of forming includes positioning the perimeter of a first side wall mold proximal to the perimeter of the second side wall mold to form a part line **30**. Each side wall mold includes external wall segments faced outwardly and includes the interior surfaces of each wall segment facing inwardly. During about the same time sequence, two like-configured end segment molds are positioned proximal to the opposed ends of the two side wall molds positioned with interior surfaces facing inwardly. A step of injecting heated polyethylene material includes injecting the polyethylene material into each side wall mold and each end wall mold, thereby forming a barrier shell having opposed side walls and opposed end walls, each respective wall thickness being about 5/16 inches. The step of forming can include a step of providing two side wall molds that are like-configured molds having a plurality of non-vertical wall segments faced outwardly (see FIG. **12**). A step of bonding provides side walls **32**, **32'** bonded together along part line **30** to produce a barrier **12** having a hollow chamber **12'** therein. The method of manufacture further includes a step of joining two like-configured ends **54**, **54'** to the opposed ends of the bonded side walls along part lines **72** and **72'**. A molding process such as a continuous rotational molding process line and associated equipment known to those skilled in the art is preferred to produce high-strength, resilient and water-tight bonds and junctions along part lines **30**, **72** and **72'** of each barrier **12**. An overall length of the barrier **12** is about seven feet, six inches. The step of providing like-configured side wall molds can additionally include providing non-vertical wall segments of the side wall molds having vertical buttresses extended outwardly in a spaced apart orientation from each wall segment. An alternative method includes a step of providing side wall molds having either one wall segment, or both non-vertical wall segments of the side wall molds lacking any vertical buttresses. An alternative step of providing can include providing one side wall mold having a plurality of non-vertical wall segments thereon, and providing a second side wall mold having a generally flat vertically oriented wall surface (see FIG. **22**).

As illustrated in FIG. **19**, an alternative embodiment of the barrier includes a barrier **210** having an OAL of about

thirteen feet, three inches, and a nested length of about twelve feet, six inches. The barrier **210** is formed by a method of manufacture having at least one step of combining along junction seam **272'**, two identical side wall sections **32, 32** aligned end-to-end to form lengths of side walls **232, 232'**. The second side wall section **232'** is bonded to first side wall **232** along junction seams **230, 230'** along top surface **222** (see FIG. **19**). The method of manufacture includes a step of joining identical ends **254, 254'** along respective junction seams **272** and **272"** to the opposed ends of the bonded side wall sections **232, 232'**. Barrier **210** includes a plurality of vertical buttresses **248***a*–**248***i* formed into each side wall **232, 232'** in spaced apart intervals. The plurality of vertical buttresses **248***a*–**248***i* provide additional rigidity for each side wall **232, 232'** and provide for additional energy-absorbing capabilities along each side wall as a vehicle impacts one or more side wall portions while being channeled along the side walls of aligned barriers **210** with resulting destruction of the vertical buttresses contacted by the vehicle to slow and contain the vehicle.

As illustrated in FIG. **20**, an alternative embodiment includes a barrier **310** having an OAL of about nineteen feet, zero inches, and a nested length of about eighteen feet, four inches. The barrier **310** is formed by a method of manufacture including a step of combining like configured side walls **332, 332', 332"** aligned end-to-end to form lengths combined along junction seams **372'** and **372"**. A step of bonding includes bonding along junction seams **330, 330', 330"** each of the side walls combined end-to-end to form a barrier shell extended from junction seam **372** to seam **372"**. A step of joining includes joining end wall segment **354** along junction seam **372**, and joining end wall segment **354'** along junction seam **372"** to form the barrier **310** of an extended length of about nineteen feet, zero inches. Barrier **310** includes a plurality of vertical buttresses **348***a*–**348***m* formed into each side wall **332, 332'** in spaced apart intervals. The plurality of vertical buttresses **348***a*–**348***m* provide additional rigidity for each side wall of the barrier **310** to provide for additional energy-absorbing capabilities along each side wall when a vehicle impacts one or more portions of the side walls. The vehicle is channeled along the impacted side walls with resulting destruction of vertical buttresses contacted by the vehicle to slow and contain the vehicle.

An alternative method of manufacture of barrier **310** includes forming units of bonded side wall units **332, 332', 332"** having opposed like-configured side walls **32, 32'** bonded together. A step of bonding for unit **332** includes bonding two identical side walls **32, 32'** along junction seam **330** along top surface **322** (see FIG. **20**). A second step of bonding for unit **332'** includes bonding two identical side walls **32, 32** along junction seam **330'** to form unit **332'**. A third step of bonding for unit **332"** includes bonding two identical side walls **32, 32** along junction seam **330"** to form unit **332"**. A first step of combining includes aligning and bonding first unit **332** to second unit **332'** along junction seam **372'** (see FIG. **20**). A second step of combining includes aligning and bonding first and second unit **332/332'** to third unit **332"** along junction seam **372"**. A step of joining includes joining identical ends **354, 354'** to opposed ends of the barrier shell **332, 332', 332"**. First end **354** is bonded at junction seam **372** to a first end of unit **332**, and the second end **354'** is bonded at junction seam **372"** to the second end of unit **332"**. Barrier **310** includes a plurality of vertical buttresses **348***a*–**348***m* formed into each side wall **332, 332'** in spaced apart intervals. The plurality of vertical buttresses **348***a*–**348***m* provide additional rigidity for each side wall **332, 332'** and provide for additional energy-absorbing capabilities along each side wall as a vehicle's bumper impacts one or more portions of the side walls and moves along the side walls with resulting destruction of respective vertical buttresses contacted by the vehicle to slow and contain the vehicle.

An alternative embodiment of a protective barrier **410** is illustrated in FIG. **22**. An alternative method of manufacture includes a step of joining a flat side second wall **430** to a first side wall **432** having a plurality of non-vertical segments (see FIG. **22**), along with a step of joining end-to-end two or more joined flat side second wall **430** and first side wall **432**, and the steps of bonding identical ends **54, 54'** to opposed ends of the joined side wall sections **430** and **432**. The protective barrier **410** can be utilized at a racetrack to provide a "soft wall" section along portions of the restraining barrier wall of the racetrack. The flat side second wall **430** is positioned against the permanently installed restraining barrier wall, with the first side wall **432** protruding inwardly toward the rode surface. The protective barrier **410** provides an additional level of protection for the driver of the race vehicle by allowing the race vehicle, when traveling out of control at high speeds, to impact a "soft wall" that is designed to absorb energy and distribute the force of impact along the end-to-end joined side walls **432**. Additional uses for the protective barrier **410** include use as a single barrier unit or as a plurality of nested barriers aligned end-to-end along public roads that are temporarily utilized during race events. The protective barrier **410** can be positioned adjacent public landmarks and existing road barriers, and/or positioned for crowd control during along any racing event or parade event requiring enhanced crowd security.

Those skilled in the art will recognize that the protection barrier system is utilized as a safety barrier in a multitude of scenarios including: a pedestrian barrier and parking area barrier when the barrier is manufactured as a thin-walled, light weight protection barrier; a readily movable empty barrier having rigid polyethylene walls for use along low speed roadways; an interlocking barrier that is easily filled with liquid or granular ballast in medium speed roadways and/or as building security barriers; and as interlocking barriers filled with liquid or granular ballast and having a plurality of tubes and cables extended through the interconnected barriers for high speed roadways or for high security military installations. In addition, an alternative embodiment having non-identical side walls sized and/or shaped differently can be utilized as energy-absorbing barriers positioned against rigid concrete or metal walls surrounding a race venue such as a go-cart track, oval race track, or a high-speed race track having multiple turns. Further, the protection barrier system is utilized as an intruder protection barrier around buildings and facilities having national security value in order to thwart or deter terrorist attacks utilizing vehicles, without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

From the foregoing description, it will be recognized by those skilled in the art that a protection barrier system is disclosed that provides a portable barrier having significant energy-absorbing and energy-deflecting capabilities. These capabilities are due to numerous innovative features of the multi-angled side walls and the opposed ends having identical interconnection means for efficient end-to-end connection of a plurality of like-configured barriers. Each barrier can be produced in at least three barrier lengths for various uses. The barrier lengths are generally light-weight barriers having water-tight hollow chambers therein. The energy-absorbing and energy-deflecting capabilities of the barrier system is significantly increased by the additional of the

components of the supplemental energy-absorbing system **80** as discussed herein. An additional embodiment for increasing the energy-absorbing and energy-deflecting capabilities of the barrier system includes combining one barrier or a plurality of barriers of the first barrier length, which are readily interdisposed by interconnecting with one or more barriers of the second barrier length, or by interconnecting with one or more barriers of the third barrier length. The selection of an appropriate length and the combination of different lengths of barriers provides a significant number of options for safety engineers and installing workers tasked with construction of a protection barrier system tailored to each unique roadway project and building construction project requiring protection of workers from moving vehicles.

While the present invention has been illustrated by description of several embodiments and while the illustrative embodiments have been described in considerable detail, it is not the intention of the applicants to restrict or in any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications will readily appear to those skilled in the art. The invention in its broader aspects is therefore not limited to the specific details of the protection barrier system including the representative apparatus, alternative embodiments, and method of manufacture, and the illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of applicants' general inventive concept.

Having thus described the aforementioned invention, we claim:

1. A protection barrier comprising:

an elongated barrier defining a chamber therein, said barrier having a base, a top surface, first and second side walls, and first and second ends, each of said first and second side walls including:

a plurality of non-vertical wall segments connected end-to-end collectively defining a side wall surface;

a plurality of buttresses extending vertically in spaced apart locations along said side wall surface; and

a guide channel being inwardly curved in said side wall surface of said first and second side walls, said guide channel being horizontally disposed to extend between each one of said plurality of buttresses, said guide channel positioned in horizontal alignment with a similar sized guide channel on like-configured barriers;

a coupling disposed on each opposed end of said barrier, each coupling being like-configured for each opposed end thereby said coupling is releasably connectable in juxtaposed end-to-end arrangement to either opposed end of like-configured barriers;

said coupling including a tongue extended from each opposed end of said barrier, said tongue extending vertically between said base and said top surface of said barrier, said tongue extended from an off-center portion of each end;

a groove indentation in each opposed end, said groove extending vertically between said base and said top surface of said barrier, said groove and said tongue having one contiguous surface; and

each opposed end of said barrier having beveled corners providing for pivotable movement of said tongue of a first barrier end relative to a second groove of a like-configured second barrier end when said tongue of either end of said first barrier is removably inserted into said second groove of either end of the like-configured second barrier thereby forming an end-to-end aligned and nesting relationship of a plurality of like-configured barriers.

2. The protection barrier of claim **1** further comprising:

an upper guide channel horizontally disposed along each side wall surface, said upper guide channel forming an inwardly curved recess in said side wall surface;

a lower guide channel horizontally disposed along said side wall surface, said lower channel forming a second inwardly curved recess spaced apart from said upper guide channel in said side wall surface; and

each of said buttresses being vertically extended from about said barrier base to about said barrier top surface, whereby each of said buttresses intersect said upper guide channel and said lower guide channel along said side wall surface of each first and second side wall;

whereby upon an impact of a vehicle with said first side wall or said second side wall, each of said buttresses are impacted with distribution of impact energy along said buttresses, said upper guide channel, said lower guide channel, and said plurality of non-vertical wall segments of the impacted first or second side wall.

3. The protection barrier of claim **2** wherein said elongated barrier is composed of polyethylene material having sufficient density for said first and second side walls to be substantially rigid, said barrier having said base wider than said top surface to facilitate retention in an upright position and further having said interior chamber accessible for filling with ballast during stationary use to facilitate energy-absorbing and retention in said upright position upon being impacted by a vehicle.

4. The protection barrier of claim **3** wherein said barrier having an inlet for receipt of ballast into said chamber, said inlet disposed through said top surface, and an outlet for release of ballast from said interior chamber, said outlet disposed on said first side wall or said second side wall adjacent said base, whereby said chamber is filled with ballast during stationary use.

5. The protection barrier of claim **4** further comprising an interconnection means including:

a connector member having a keyhole slot therein, said connector member is pivotably disposed on an end post extended from said barrier top surface proximal to each coupling disposed on opposed first and second ends of said barrier;

whereby said tongue of said first end of said barrier is removably inserted into said groove indentation of either of a like-configured first and second end of a like-configured second barrier, said connector member is removably disposed to retain said tongue inserted in said groove indentation of either of the like-configured first and second ends of the end-to-end nested arrangement of the plurality of like-configured barriers.

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